



Sam. M.

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

✓ OF

JOHN ERSKINE, D. D.

LATE ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF EDINBURGH.

BY

SIR HENRY MONCREIFF WELLWOOD, BART. D.D.

WITH AN APPENDIX AND NOTES.

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PREFACE.

SOME expectation was given of a Life of Dr Erskine, in an advertisement prefixed to the second volume of his Discourses.

The public would probably take no interest in the circumstances which have, till very lately, prevented the author of the following narrative from prosecuting his intention : And he is too sensible of the defects which will be found in what he has written at last, to think any apology for the delay, either of importance in itself, or respectful to his readers.

The life of an individual, however distinguished, which has been uniformly spent at home, and has been chiefly occupied in private studies and pastoral duties, could not offer to his biographer much variety of detail, or hold out to the public any of the unexpected or striking memorials, on

which so much of the interest of biography depends.

The private history of general literature, of political science, or of liberal arts, will find readers in every rank of life, and furnishes inexhaustible materials of biography.

But a narrative of the studies of a parochial clergyman, and of the few incidents which occur within the limited sphere of his activity, cannot be offered to the public with these advantages: Nor will his theological researches, or his labours in promoting practical religion, however important or indefatigable, create any thing like the same interest, among an equal number of common readers.

The following narrative cannot be expected to contain much more, than a plain and unvarnished account of theological industry, pastoral duties, and a conscientious life.

The occasional remarks suggested by these different subjects, and the representation given of many individuals whose names appear in connection with them, have given

some degree of variety, and perhaps of diffuseness, to the narrative. But whether they have added any thing which will interest the public, the author has no right to determine.

He has at least endeavoured to give a fair and correct representation of the facts which he has related, and of the views and conduct of those who were concerned in them. And he allows himself to hope, that no prejudices of his own will be found to have prevented him, from doing justice to the talents or the character of any individual.

In a narrative which embraces such a variety of subjects, he is far from being confident, that he has not fallen into many mistakes. He relies on the indulgence of his readers, where his information has been incomplete. And, if he has hazarded opinions in which they cannot acquiesce, he can only submit to them the reasons which have influenced his judgment, and trust to their candour.

He found it impossible to incorporate

with his narrative, any such intelligible view of ecclesiastical proceedings in Scotland, as could have explained the conduct of Dr Erskine in the Church Courts, to those who are unacquainted with the history and constitution of the Scottish Church. He has therefore, in the first number of the Appendix, subjoined a slight sketch or outline of the ecclesiastical history of Scotland, from the Revolution in 1688, to the year 1780 ; and has incidentally alluded to some important facts preceding the commencement of that period.

He is fully aware that his representations on this subject will not accord with the views of keen partizans, on either side of the church. But he is conscious, that he has at least sincerely intended, to set down, fairly and impartially, as it appeared to him, every transaction which occurs, in the sketch which he has attempted, without allowing his mind to be influenced, in the slightest degree, by any party views or feelings.

If it shall, in any instance, be imagined,

that he has hazarded opinions which better accord with his own habits of thinking, than with the facts which he has stated, though he is unconscious of this mistake, he will not assert that there is no ground for imputing it to him. But he can affirm with confidence, that he has at least endeavoured to do conscientious justice to every party in the church, and to animadvert on the public conduct of no individual.

The first number in the Appendix is undoubtedly too long. And yet the author is sensible that the sketch which it contains would have required a much more minute and extended detail, to render it either complete or satisfactory, on many of the points which are alluded to.

Some illustrations will be found in the Notes, which are not unimportant ; and a few anecdotes and illustrations are inserted, which to some readers may perhaps be interesting.

H. MONCREIFF WELLWOOD.

Edinburgh, 24th February 1818.

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LIFE
OF
JOHN ERSKINE, D. D.

CHAP. I.

Dr Erskine's Birth and Education.

JOHAN ERSKINE, D. D., late minister of the Old Greyfriars' Church of Edinburgh, was the eldest son of John Erskine of Carnock, Esq. advocate, and of Margaret Melvill, daughter of the Honourable James Melvill of Bargarvie.

His father was the eldest son of Lieutenant-Colonel John Erskine of Carnock, son of Henry, second Lord Cardross, and uncle to David, fourth Lord Cardross, who afterwards succeeded to the titles of the Earl of Buchan.

The second Lord Cardross, like many distinguished noblemen of his time, was severely persecuted in the reign of Charles II., for his attachment to the Presbyterian church, and for the protection which he gave to the clergy of that communion.*

In a memorial which he presented to Charles II., in 1680, containing a recital of the unmerited and aggravated hardships which he had suffered, he states a fact which ought to have been sufficient in the mind of the King, if he had possessed a single spark, either of generosity or of principle, to blot out every supposed offence imputed to him,—that he had been one of the few Scotch noblemen who publicly dissented from the resolution to deliver up King Charles I. to the English at Newcastle.†

The family of Buchan have reason to be proud of an ancestor, whose personal sufferings on record are monuments to his descendants, of his firm attachment to the re-

* See Note A.

† Wodrow's History, Vol. II. p. 125.

ligion and laws of his country; and of a loyalty, which, though it stood the test amidst the prostitution of his countrymen, a profligate and persecuting government disdained to remember; and which an unprincipled monarch, with his characteristic meanness and ingratitude, consigned to oblivion.

Lord Cardross afterwards emigrated to the Continent, with his two sons, and fixed his residence in Holland, to wait the approach of better times, which happily were not then very remote.

Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine, his second son, the grandfather of Dr Erskine, was, by this account of his family, naturally united, from his earliest years, with those who most zealously supported the Revolution in 1688.

Attached to King William, by his personal knowledge of him, by his military habits, and by his public principles, he was equally classed with the old Whigs in the state, and with the zealous Presbyterians in the church. He was of consequence afterwards associated with the firmest friends of

the Hanover succession, and with the determined opponents of every attempt for the restoration of the exiled family.*

This view of his general opinions may, at first sight, appear inconsistent with another well-attested trait in his character. Though he was from principle attached to King William and the Revolution of 1688, he could never be persuaded to take the oaths required by the government which the Revolution established. He was dissatisfied with the terms of the oath of abjuration, and was so conscientious in adhering to his scruples on this subject, that, Whig as he certainly was, he steadily refused to take this oath as long as he lived.†

But the general principles of the Revolution, as they affected either the church or the state, he asserted and defended, with equal firmness and zeal. His family had suffered severely from the atrocities of an arbitrary government; and, as might have been naturally supposed, the encroachments of tyranny, in public or in private

* See Note B.

† See Note C.

life, he was always prepared to meet with the most intrepid resistance.*

In his private intercourse, the keenness, or rather the irritability of his temper, was a prominent feature in his character ; easily excited by common occurrences, but so quickly subsiding, as to be equally removed from ungenerous hostility, and vindictive resentments. Many amusing anecdotes, founded on this circumstance, are still retailed among those who are old enough to have lived with any of his associates or contemporaries.†

As he did not take the oaths required by law, he could hold no office, and could take no active part in the state or in the army, and was not employed in either of these departments after the Revolution. But there being no such obstruction to his interference in ecclesiastical affairs, his activity in public life was, from this time, chiefly conspicuous in the annual assemblies of the national church, which were

* See Note D.

† See Note E.

then regarded with general respect and confidence, and in which his personal influence was at all times considerable.

Equally zealous as an old Presbyterian, and a Revolution Whig, he took a distinguished part in every interesting question, which, in that busy and bustling period, divided the clergy, or agitated the church. As a ruling elder, he was uniformly returned a member of Assembly by the presbytery of Dunfermline, within the bounds of which his estate of Carnock was situated, if not at an earlier period, (which is not quite certain,) at least from the year 1704 to the year 1742. In many of the first of these years, he is designed in the records of Assembly, “ Lieutenant-Colonel John “ Erskine of Carnock, son to the deceased “ Lord Cardross.”

He had the entire confidence of what was then the ruling party, both in the country and in the church. And, in the great question so long agitated in General Assemblies, relating to the induction of ministers to parochial benefices, (of which more

will be said hereafter,) he had such a decided influence among those who, during the chief part of his life, formed the majorities in assemblies, and who held the most popular doctrines on the great questions which were then at issue, as to be brought forward and trusted by them, in every important transaction, in which the constitution or the government of the church was involved.

A striking example occurs in the last part of his life, when the General Assembly of 1735 appointed commissioners to go to London, for the purpose of applying to Parliament, and to the Crown, for a repeal of the act of the 10th of Queen Anne, which restored to patrons in Scotland the right of presenting to parish churches, of which the act 1690 had deprived them. The two latest Moderators of Assembly (Mr Gordon of Alford, who was afterwards minister of Alloa, and Mr Anderson, minister of St Andrews) were associated with Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine, the only ruling elder whose name appears in the commission.

To those who are acquainted with the importance which was then attached to the object of this mission, no stronger proof can be given of the confidence which Colonel Erskine must have possessed among the leading men of the church; or, indeed, of the personal influence which was ascribed to him, with those who had then the management of the state.

Mr Wodrow, the historian, mentioning Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine, who was alive when his book was published, says of him, "that his bright character, his modesty
" would not allow him to enter upon."*

If this detail in the history of the grandfather has occupied more space than some readers may think should have been allotted to it, in an introduction to the life of the grandson, let it at least be remembered, that it is only in writings of this kind that such memorials are preserved of many individuals, who have been equally distinguished as ornaments and as benefactors of their country; and that even detached a-

* Wodrow's History, Vol. I. p. 394. See Note F.

necdotes are interesting, when they are the best means which remain to recal the memory of the leading characters or transactions of former times.

John Erskine of Carnock, the eldest son of Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine, and the father of Dr Erskine, held a distinguished rank at the Scotch bar ; and was, besides, for the greatest part of his life, a most meritorious Professor of Scotch Law in the University of Edinburgh.

From the feebleness of his voice, and perhaps from his constitutional modesty, he seldom pleaded at the bar. But the extent of his knowledge, and the strength of his understanding, eminently qualified him for his office in the University ; while his written opinions, in causes in which he was consulted as a lawyer, were regarded with universal respect.

His Institutes, which contain the substance of his prelections in the University, form, at the present time, the most considerable book of reference on which the Scotch lawyers rely, and contain the most complete expo-

sition existing of the principles and practice of the law of Scotland.

He had none of his father's peculiarities ; and the general character of his mind appears to have been extremely different from his. With greater mildness and equality of temper, and much more acquired knowledge, he had less inclination for the bustle of public life, and seems to have taken scarcely any interest in party-contentions, either in the church or in the state. His activity was, in a great measure, confined within the sphere of his literary or professional occupations, and of his private and domestic pursuits. His public reputation, as well as his personal virtues, entitle his descendants to place his name in the list of their most respected ancestors.

Dr Erskine was his only child by his first marriage. He married a second wife, the daughter of Mr Stirling of Keir, by whom he left three younger sons,—James, who succeeded to his estates of Cardross *

* The estate of Cardross, formerly belonging to the family of Buchan, was purchased by Mr Erskine at a judicial sale, and has been a fortunate acquisition to his family.

and Kincardine in Perthshire,*—David, a clerk to his Majesty's signet, who is allowed by all competent judges to have been one of the ablest and most honourable men whom his profession has ever produced,†—and Archibald, a major in the army.

Dr Erskine's relations, by his father, had not only every advantage which they could derive from their family connections, but, in the general esteem of the public, they had a distinction from their talents, and from the acknowledged worth of their personal characters, which no rank or fortune can separately confer.

* He married Lady Christian Bruce, the daughter of the Earl of Kincardine, by whom he left the present David Erskine of Cardross, who married the daughter of Lord Elphinston.

† He married the daughter of Mr Graham of Airth, and was succeeded by his eldest son, James Erskine of Linlethan; whose respectability did honour to the family from which he was descended; but who died in the prime of life, equally regretted for the good sense and affectionate manners, and for the genuine piety and purity of mind, which eminently distinguished him. His fortune has descended to his only brother, Thomas Erskine, now of Linlethan, whose exemplary conduct does equal credit to the family of his father, and to his brother's memory.

By his mother he was related to families equally respectable.

Her father was the second son of George, fourth Lord Melvill, who, as the head of a family always distinguished as Whigs and Presbyterians, was his Majesty's commissioner to the Scotch Parliament in 1690; and whose son David afterwards inherited the titles, both of Leven and Melvill. With this family Dr Erskine's connection was still more closely cemented, by the marriage of his father's sister to Alexander, Earl of Leven and Melvill, the grandfather of the present earl.

No individual could have valued himself less than Dr Erskine did, on the adventitious distinction which he derived from his birth; and it will be readily admitted, by those who are acquainted with the progress of his life, that the advantages which he might have derived from his family connections, were much more than compensated, in the public opinion, by the honour which his venerable character reflected on them.

When he mentioned his age, in the latter part of his life, he did not seem to think it quite certain whether he was born in 1720, or in 1721. It is most probable, however, and this he was himself inclined to believe, that his birth was in the last of these years.

The minuteness of his early acquaintance with ancient authors, is a sufficient proof of the accuracy of his grammar-school education, which he received at Edinburgh. But he had for his private tutor a man who was afterwards distinguished as one of the ablest and most conscientious ministers of the church, Robert Bryce, minister of the parish of Dron in Perthshire. Under the care of a tutor, who was not less eminent as a scholar, than as a man of principle, he had certainly great advantages from the commencement of his studies; and there is good reason for supposing, that the effects of his judgment and fidelity attended his pupil to the end of his life.

The humble and unseen labours of a private tutor, though they often lie at the foundation both of literary eminence and per-

sonal character, are too frequently unacknowledged by those who ought chiefly to remember them, or are neglected in the account of their early acquisitions. This is a great injustice to an order of men, whose conscientious labours are of so much importance to the education of a great proportion of every enlightened country,* and who so often become eminent themselves when they have no longer pupils to instruct.

Dr Erskine always mentioned Mr Bryce with the affection due to his venerable character, and never lost an opportunity of expressing his respect for his memory.

There is some difficulty in ascertaining the year in which Dr Erskine was admitted a student in the university of Edinburgh.

In the appendix to his sermon on the death of Dr Robertson, he says that his acquaintance with him commenced in the Humanity Class (the first in the order of study in the University) in 1737. On the

* In the life of Addison, Dr Johnson has applied a similar remark to schoolmasters.

other hand, Mr Stewart, in his *Life of Dr Robertson*, says, that *he* went to the University in 1733.

These accounts cannot both be correct, and a difference of four years it is impossible to reconcile with the facts, that Dr Robertson and Dr Erskine were of the same age, and are understood to have commenced their academical studies at the same time.

It would be natural to prefer the account given by Dr Erskine himself to the narrative of Dr Robertson's biographer; especially as Dr Erskine's sermon was published several years before his death, and, if he had been aware that it contained any mistake, there was sufficient time to have corrected it before he published a second edition. *

But the difficulties are considerable in setting down the date given by him as correct. It would suppose that Dr Robertson and he had reached their sixteenth year before they went to the University; an age which by no means corresponds with the

* The second edition appeared in 1801, and the sermon had been preached in 1793.

plan of education then generally followed, and still less with their subsequent history and progress. In 1741, Dr Erskine published his remarks on Dr Campbell's book, (a production to be afterwards mentioned,) which it is not easy to conceive a young man to have written, within less than three years after he had left the Humanity Class. In the same year, Dr Robertson is stated by his biographer to have been licensed to preach; and this fact it is scarcely possible to reconcile with the commencement of his academical studies in 1737.

On the other hand, there was a well-known club, which subsisted for nearly half a century, by the name of the Hen-Club, which is said to have comprehended gentlemen who had attended the Humanity Class at Edinburgh in 1737, 1738, and 1739, to which Dr Robertson, Dr Erskine, Dr Carlyle, Mr John Home, and many other distinguished individuals belonged; and this fact, if it is correct, would lead to a suspicion of Mr Stewart's date, though the year given by him certainly agrees bet-

ter with some other circumstances than the year 1737.

The question is of no importance, otherwise than as it would have been desirable to reconcile, even in such a minute point, two narratives, which have both been derived from the most authentic sources.

That Dr Erskine had been a most industrious student at the University, was sufficiently attested by his classical knowledge, which was unquestionably of the first order ; by the multiplicity of commonplace books which he filled up during his course of academical education ; and by the literary habits which, from that time, so eminently and uniformly distinguished him.

He had early acquired the faculty of writing in short-hand But it is impossible not to regret, that, though he derived from it some advantages for his private studies, this circumstance has rendered a great proportion of the papers which he has left behind him quite illegible and useless. He never wrote well ; and his short-hand was

most particularly defective, even to those who understood the characters.

When a circumstance of this kind is added to the consideration, that, of those who write in short-hand, there are few who use the same characters, it may well be doubted, whether the advantage which a man of letters receives from this contrivance to lessen his labour, is ever sufficient to compensate the entire loss of his acquisitions, to those to whom his handwriting is illegible; or the impossibility of his receiving from them much of the assistance which might be given him during his life.

Dr Erskine certainly wrote a great deal from the commencement of his academical studies, and availed himself of every advantage which the University afforded him; and it is no inconsiderable proof of his ardour, that he preserved in his latest years the most grateful recollection of his obligations to the Professors under whom his literary acquisitions began.

In the Appendix to his Sermon on the

Death of Dr Robertson, he has distinguished three individuals, to whom he considered himself as peculiarly indebted ; and whose names he was accustomed to mention with delight and gratitude to the end of his life ; Mr John Kerr, Professor of Humanity, Dr John Stevenson, Professor of Logic, and Sir John Pringle, who was afterwards so much distinguished as a physician, and as President of the Royal Society of London, and who was then Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh.

Mr Kerr he has celebrated for the enthusiasm with which he entered into the books which he explained, and for his peculiar talents, as well in gaining the affection of his scholars, as in exciting and directing their ardour in the study of the Latin classics.

He has given a more detailed eulogium on the prelections of Dr Stevenson and Sir John Pringle ; which it would be injustice to their memory not to exhibit in his own words.

“ Before this time,” he says, “ the Logic

“ Class had been in a great measure con-
“ fined to the doctrine of syllogisms, and
“ the dull and dry distinctions connected
“ with it. These, and other things in the
“ old logic, useful, if not for discovering
“ truth, at least for the detection or confu-
“ tation of error, Dr Stevenson did not dis-
“ card. But he attempted, and attempted
“ with success, greater things. A morning
“ hour he spent in reading, first a book of
“ Homer’s *Iliad*, then Aristotle’s *Art of*
“ *Poetry*, and lastly, Longinus on the Su-
“ blime ; and illustrated the beauties of the
“ first, and the rules of the two last, by
“ apposite passages from Greek, Latin,
“ French, and English authors.

“ In the forenoon he prelected, first
“ on Heineccius’s *Logic*, then on Bishop
“ Wynne’s *Abridgment of Locke’s Essay*,
“ and on Devries’s *Metaphysics*. An hour
“ in the afternoon was employed, on three
“ days of the week, in prelecting on Heinec-
“ cius’s *History of Philosophy*. Thus the
“ elements of criticism were taught by
“ striking examples, rather than by intri-

“ cate precepts. The steps were traced by
“ which some had investigated truth, and
“ by which others were betrayed into error.

“ The acuteness of the students was ex-
“ ercised by frequent opportunities given to
“ them to impugn a philosophical thesis ;
“ and they were taught to apply to prac-
“ tice the rules of composition, in dis-
“ courses prescribed on subjects connected
“ with eloquence, logic, metaphysics, and
“ the history of philosophy.”

“ Dr (afterwards Sir John) Pringle,” Dr
Erskine goes on to say, “ taught at the
“ same time the Moral Philosophy Class.
“ His lectures were not on so large a scale.
“ He did not enter into curious disquisi-
“ tions on the foundations of morality, or
“ on the progress of society ; and he soon
“ dispatched what he chose to say on
“ pneumatics and natural religion. His
“ lectures were calculated for doing good,
“ not for a display of his talents, or for
“ gaining applause. They led his hearers to
“ an acquaintance with the world, and to
“ the knowledge of their own hearts. They

“ taught them what dispositions are good,
“ and just, and wise, and honourable. As
“ far as reason goes, they delineated the
“ paths by which individuals and families
“ may probably reach safe and innocent
“ enjoyments, and by which states acquire
“ and preserve their prosperity. They
“ warned the students against the dangers
“ to which human virtue and happiness are
“ exposed, and recommended various means
“ for repelling them. Generously unwilling
“ to grasp the honour to which, in his
“ opinion, another had a juster claim, he
“ often illustrated and confirmed his im-
“ portant remarks, on morals, on govern-
“ ment, and on police, by reading long
“ passages from Plutarch, Montaigne, Char-
“ ron, Bacon, Sydney, Harrington, Moles-
“ worth, and others.

“ To those students with whose proficien-
“ cy he was best satisfied, he prescribed
“ discourses, sometimes in English, and
“ sometimes in Latin. Every one was al-
“ lowed to compose on natural religion,
“ morals, or politics, as his genius or incli-

“ nation prompted him. But the particu-
“ lar subject was determined by lot. Many
“ individuals from other classes attended
“ when these discourses were delivered. That
“ great encourager of the study of the classics,
“ and of moral and political science, Dr Wil-
“ liam Wisheart, Principal of the University,
“ often honoured these discourses with his
“ presence, listened to them with attention,
“ and criticised them with candour. To the
“ students in whom, on such occasions, he
“ observed indications, either of genius or
“ of good dispositions, he took every oppor-
“ tunity of shewing his regard and counte-
“ nance.

“ Professors Stevenson and Pringle were
“ equally attached to those of their students,
“ who in any degree deserved their partiali-
“ ty ; and often invited them to spend a
“ morning hour with them, when their con-
“ versation was chiefly directed to literary
“ subjects.” *

This is a long extract. But it will not

* Appendix to Sermon on Dr Robertson's Death, 2d edition,
p. 265, 268. See Note G.

be thought tedious by those who either consider, that the substance of what it contains deserves to be remembered, or that it is the narrative of Dr Erskine. At the age of seventy-two, he tells us, that he had recorded these particulars “from gratitude to instructors, whose memory was dear to him;” and this must be the apology for inserting them, without abridgment, in this account of his life.

Independent of the testimony given to the merits of individuals, who did honour to most important situations, by one who was in all respects competent to appreciate them; his narrative exhibits a striking feature in his own character, which ought not to be forgotten. It is a precious memorial of the grateful affections which he had preserved through life for the instructors of his youth; while it demonstrates the ardour of his original studies, and the permanent effects which they had produced on his habits of thinking.

He never lost sight of his obligations to the men with whom he connected his

earliest acquisitions in literature and science; and from the native simplicity and fairness of his mind, he eagerly embraced the opportunity which was given him by his Sermon on the Death of Dr Robertson, to incorporate his gratitude to them, with his affection for the memory of his celebrated colleague.

Dr Robertson appears to have cherished a similar feeling with regard to his original instructors. For, after mentioning his studies under Sir John Pringle, his biographer has related, “that he had often been heard “to say, that to the valuable prelections of “Dr Stevenson, Professor of Logic, particularly to his illustrations of Aristotle’s “Poetics, and Longinus on the Sublime, “he considered himself as more deeply indebted, than to any other circumstance in “his academical studies.”

CHAP. II.

Dr Erskine's Resolution to become a Clergyman.—His first Publication.—The Commencement of his Correspondence with Dr Warburton.

THOUGH, from his earliest years, Dr Erskine had discovered a strong predilection for theological studies, it had been the wish of his family, that he should have followed the profession of his father at the Scotch bar. For that profession he would certainly have had great advantages, from the assistance and the reputation of his father,—from the influence of his family, which might have placed him in any situation which he was qualified to fill,—and, above all, from the learning, acuteness, and industry, of which he gave early indications, and which eminently distinguished him through life;—advantages which could scarcely have failed to secure his success in that respectable profession.

Among his immediate contemporaries and

companions, there were many individuals who became the ornaments both of the bar and of the bench—the Lord President Miller, Lord Elhock, Lord Alva, Lord Kennet, Lord Gardenston, Lord Justice Clerk, (Braxfield,) &c. If he wanted any of the qualities for a bustling life, by which some of them were distinguished, (and most of them are to be classed with the first men of their time,) in classical knowledge, in literary industry, in the acuteness of a discriminating understanding, or in family connections, he was inferior to none of them. In the keenness, the ardour, and the indefatigable patience with which he applied his mind to every object which occupied him, he was, perhaps, superior to them all.

His father and grandfather, aware of these advantages, were very naturally solicitous that he should have embraced the condition of a barrister. His respect for their judgment, and his wish to gratify them, had so much influence, that, for a considerable time after his philosophical education was completed, he did apply to the study of law. And

that he had applied to it with an industry and success which might have raised him to eminence, was evident to those who lived with him in the later periods of his life.

Though, from the very different habits of another profession, he had not many opportunities of bringing forward the knowledge which he had acquired at this time, yet some occasions there were, in which, in maintaining a legal argument, he discovered an acquaintance with civil law, and with the great principles of legal interpretation, which would have done no discredit to the first practitioners at the bar.

But theology and practical religion had always interested him more than any other subjects ; and the farther he advanced, his inclination became stronger to devote his life to the service of the church. He believed that, in discharging the duties of a minister of the gospel, he had a better prospect of usefulness and comfort, from the temper of his mind, and the studies in which he had most delight, than any secular profession would have given him.

He was probably convinced, besides, that an inclination for the pastoral office, so uniform and so strong as that of which he had never been able to divest himself, and which had kept possession of his mind, not only in opposition to the wishes of his family, whom it was so much his disposition to gratify, but to every object of ambition which his original advantages presented to him, was no uncertain indication that this was the situation to which his talents were best adapted, and for which Providence had designed him.

It will be readily admitted, by those who had afterwards sufficient opportunities of being intimately acquainted with him, that, in this instance, he formed a sound judgment of the character and tendency of his own mind.

It appears from a letter which he received from Dr Doddridge of Northampton, dated June 11, 1743, that he had stated his reasons at full length for the resolution which he adopted in a letter to his father, of which he sent Dr Doddridge a copy.

The following paragraph of Dr Doddridge's Reply deserves to be transcribed. "The
" account which you gave to your worthy
" father of the motives that determined
" your resolution to enter on the ministry,
" in that excellent letter which you favoured
" me with a copy of, abundantly convinces
" me that you were indeed under a divine
" guidance in that resolution. And I can-
" not but look on it as a great token for
" good to the church, that a gentleman of
" your distinguished abilities, (of which the
" pamphlet you sent me is a valuable spe-
" cimen,*) and of your elevated circum-
" stances in human life, should be willing
" to engage in so laborious a work as the
" ministry, in the midst of the various dis-
" couragements which attend it. I hope God
" will abundantly bless your labours for the
" good of souls ; and I will venture to tell
" you, from my own experience, that if he
" does so, instead of repenting of your

* His Pamphlet in Answer to Dr Campbell's book on the Necessity of Revelation.

“ choice, you will rejoice in it through the
“ course of your life, and in the nearest
“ prospects of death and eternity.”

It must be recollected, that, when Dr Erskine took his resolution to go into the church, he was precisely at the time of life when he had the power of deciding, without any violation of his previous obligations. He had embraced no other profession. The short time during which he had applied to the study of law, had added to his general knowledge, without creating any obligation from which he could not honourably recede. He was neither pledged to another profession, nor too far advanced in life to select that which he preferred ; for his resolution must have been finally taken, when he had scarcely reached his twenty-second year ; and, for several years before that date, a considerable portion of his time must have been occupied by the study of theology.

It is not for the advantage either of the church or of the country, that they who have been long in the habits of secular pro-

fessions, and who have already reached the later, or even the middle stages of life, should abandon the situations in which providence has placed them, under the pretence of obtaining a sphere of usefulness as ministers of the gospel, for which they imagine themselves to be better qualified, than for their original professions.

This experiment has been often made without success ; sometimes, undoubtedly, from a real solicitude to have more direct opportunities to promote the interests of religion, than a secular profession admits of ; sometimes also from discontent, disappointment, or chagrin, created by other situations ; and in some instances, perhaps, from mere caprice or indecision, or (what is not less mischievous) from private vanity or presumption, of which the individuals themselves have been scarcely aware.

But let no man plead the example of Dr Erskine, for these unfortunate specimens of unthinking and hopeless versatility. He took his resolution precisely at the time when his line of life ought to have been de-

cided, and when he was unfettered by any tie or obligation, but the respect which was due to the wishes of his family.

In embracing the clerical profession, he believed that he was selecting the department to which his views and talents were best adapted ; and his conviction on this subject was both so deliberate and so completely settled, as to leave no reasonable doubt, that the sense of duty, and no inferior considerations, governed his resolution.

They who have attended to the progress of his pastoral labours, from their commencement to their close, will scarcely question the soundness of his judgment on this occasion ; nor will any of them regret, that he preferred the humble condition of a conscientious clergyman to the advantages which he might have commanded in a secular profession, so much more fascinating in the eye of the world.

His father and grandfather, though certainly averse to the resolution which he adopted, yielded to a determination with which they saw him connecting the happi-

ness as well as the usefulness of his life ; and their conduct to him afterwards was uniformly distinguished by the same good temper and affection which they had always shewn him.

They had no reason at any time to regret their acquiescence. After he had successively held two different benefices in the country, and was at last fixed in the metropolis of Scotland, his father lived many years to regard him as the pride of his family, and to receive the most gratifying satisfaction from the character universally assigned him, as a conscientious minister, indefatigable in his pastoral labours, eminent for his learning, and venerable for his piety.

It has been already mentioned, that theology, and the subjects connected with it, had been at all times his favourite study ; and, at least two years before the date of the letter from Dr Doddridge, which has been quoted, when he had scarcely reached his twentieth year, he gave a striking proof of the success and assiduity with which he had applied to them.

Dr Archibald Campbell, Professor of Divinity and Ecclesiastical History in the University of St Andrews, had published a book on “The Necessity of Revelation,” which, having excited considerable attention in Scotland, had become a subject of discussion in the General Assembly of the Church and its Commission, in 1735 and 1736, as a book which was affirmed to contain doubtful, if not heretical, tenets, which required ecclesiastical interference and animadversion.

The General Assembly had shewn no inclination to interpret either his argument or his expressions with severity; but convinced of the purity of his intentions, while they condemned certain propositions extracted from his book, they accepted of such explanations and modifications of the language objected to, as enabled them to release him from a prosecution, which would not have promoted the interests either of learning or religion.

If Dr Erskine, not then above the age of fourteen, cannot be supposed to have en-

tered much into this controversy at the time when it was first agitated, there were circumstances connected with it, or to which it had given rise, which afterwards attracted his attention to the subject, and gave the public the first specimen of his talents as an author.

Though Professor Campbell did not deserve to be prosecuted or censured by the church as a writer of heresies, and, on the contrary, was entitled to protection and respect, both as a sincere and an able defender of Christianity, the assertions of his book, often ingenious and always well intended, but sometimes stretched beyond the truth, were subjects of fair discussion ; and the fact certainly is, that they did involve several propositions, in which many of his most candid readers were not prepared to acquiesce.

Some modern divines and philosophers, less from the love of truth than the affectation of false refinement, had become fond of asserting that Christianity is to be chiefly regarded as a republication of the law of

nature. Tindall, seizing on this idea, with every disposition to undermine the authority of the Gospel, published his treatise entitled, "Christianity as Old as the Creation ;" in which it is confidently affirmed, "That men are fully able of themselves, without foreign assistance, to discover all the articles of natural religion which are necessary to their happiness."

On this assertion he built another, which strikes at the root of all positive revelation, "That articles of faith which lie beyond the reach of human discovery, or which have no immediate foundation in nature, but are positive institutions depending on will or authority, can never be admitted as a divine revelation."

In opposition to this unfounded and pernicious doctrine, Dr Campbell proposed to shew, "That mankind, left to themselves, without supernatural instruction, are not able, by their reason alone, to discover the being and perfections of God, and the immortality of human souls, in the knowledge and belief of which all religion is founded."

He did not enter into the consideration of the last part of Tindall's position, farther than to suppose an answer to it to be deducible from what he attempted to prove, with regard to the inability of man to discover, by his reason alone, the great doctrines of natural religion.

That Dr Campbell's intentions were pure, and that his books were sincerely designed for the defence of Christianity, was not doubted by those who differed most from him in opinion, and since his death has never been questioned. But whatever degree of credit was given to his intentions, a very considerable clamour had been excited against him in the Church.

The Commission of the General Assembly of 1735 had extracted from his book certain propositions, which had been supposed to contain suspicious, if not dangerous, doctrines. But, in reporting these to the Assembly of 1736, which adopted their opinions implicitly, they expressed themselves so favourably with regard to Dr Campbell's intentions, that the proceedings

of the Assembly terminated in general recommendations against the use of doubtful or ambiguous expressions or propositions, which might be construed into an erroneous sense, or lead the hearers or readers into error.

There were other points besides that which has been mentioned, which were included in the Assembly's animadversions, of which it is not necessary to say any thing here, because the only question which Dr Erskine afterwards discussed with the author, arose out of his assertion concerning the inability of man, by reason alone, without the help of supernatural revelation, to discover the being and perfections of God, or the immortality of human souls.

The resolutions of this Assembly are in general temperate and reasonable, with regard to the propositions assumed by Dr Campbell; though it may, perhaps, be doubted, whether they who prepared them were not too minute and dogmatical in some of the positions laid down by themselves.

It has been already observed, that when this controversy began, Dr Erskine (then at the age of fourteen) could scarcely be supposed to have taken much interest in it. But it had gained the attention of the public, so as to bring Dr Campbell's book into general request ; and, at the age of twenty, he appears to have perused it with all the ardour and accuracy which distinguished him through life.

In 1741, he published a pamphlet in refutation of Dr Campbell's doctrine ; in which it will not be denied by any competent judge, that he has discussed that part of the argument to which he confined himself, with an extent of learning and a minuteness of research, not only above his years at the time, but not inferior to what is to be found in his best productions at any subsequent period.

In opposition to the assertion of the insufficiency of reason to conduct men to the knowledge of the true God, or of the immortality of their own souls, he undertook to prove, " That God has afforded, even

“ the heathen world, such advantages for
“ discovering and receiving the doctrines
“ which relate to the existence and perfec-
“ tions of God, and the immortality of hu-
“ man souls, (in the knowledge and belief
“ of which all religion is founded,) that their
“ ignorance or disbelief of them could be
“ owing to nothing but their own negligence
“ or perverseness.”

In pursuing his argument, he avails himself of his classical literature, and of his acquaintance with the writings of Grotius, Puffendorf, Vinnius, and others, among the most distinguished writers on civil law. The number and exactness of his quotations from both ancient and modern books, and the quick discernment with which they are applied to support his argument, are lasting monuments of an extent of information, a maturity of judgment, and powers of discrimination, of which few equal examples can be produced, from the pen of any individual, at the same early age.

His argument it is impossible to abridge. But it may be justly questioned, whether

there is any portion of his writings, in which there is a more successful display, either of exact and extensive learning, or of acute and forcible reasoning. Whether his readers differ from him, or adopt his opinion, it is impossible not to perceive the distinguished ability with which his hypothesis is sustained.

Among modern authors quoted in this dissertation, the name of Dr Warburton, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, appears with particular distinction. And there is some reason for supposing, that the eagerness with which Dr Erskine entered into the controversy with Dr Campbell might have had its origin, though probably without his own knowledge, in the respect with which he regarded the opinions of that eminent prelate, and particularly the opinions which distinguish his book on the Divine Legation of Moses. He describes him in this dissertation, as “one of the most judicious
“critics, and accurate reasoners, which this
“age has produced,—who has cast a new
“light on the philosophy and theology of

“ the ancients, and applied his admirable
“ discoveries to the most noble purposes.”

Dr Warburton had certainly asserted the same general doctrine with regard to natural religion, which Dr Erskine maintained ; though, when he did so, he might have had no knowledge of Dr Campbell's book, with which, however, he appears to have been afterwards acquainted. Dr Erskine sent him a copy of his dissertation ; and it gave occasion to a correspondence, which was continued at intervals, till very near the close of Warburton's life.

His first letter appears from the answer to have been dated on the 18th of November 1741. Warburton's reply, which is not written till the following July, and a second letter from him of a later date, shall be inserted here. The rest of the correspondence will occur in another part of this narrative.

“ *Newark, in Nottinghamshire,*

“ *July 17, 1742.*

“ DEAR SIR,—When I received the honour of your last * obliging letter of the

* The expression “ last ” supposes the correspondence to

“ 18th of November, I was just setting for-
“ ward for Bath, partly for my health, and
“ partly for Mr Pope’s company, which I
“ enjoyed there and in London, till spring
“ brought me home. Many impertinent
“ and troublesome businesses—*aliena nego-*
“ *tia centum*—have prevented me thus long
“ from making my due acknowledgments
“ for so kind a letter ; but I can truly say,
“ you was never out of my thoughts.

“ Besides, I flattered myself with an
“ opportunity of writing you long before
“ now. For I expected that a new edition
“ of my Commentary on the Essay on Man,
“ which is just printed, would have been
“ long since out of the press ; and I pro-
“ posed to beg your acceptance of a copy,
“ which I now do, and have ordered it to be
“ delivered for you to Mr Gideon Crawford.

“ What you are pleased to inform me,
“ that you intend some time or other to col-
“ lect what reflections you have made on the
“ law of nature, &c. pleases me extremely.

have commenced before this time. But this is the earliest
letter of Warburton’s which has been preserved.

“ For it must be one of your parts and
“ enlarged studies that can do this to pur-
“ pose; not a little, narrow, sour theolo-
“ gaster. Both which truths your excellent
“ remarks against Dr Campbell’s weak
“ book sufficiently prove.

“ I am vexed you published at Edin-
“ burgh, and in such a size, which, if print-
“ ed in London, would have made us some
“ amends for that execrable swarm of pam-
“ phlets that pester the town; and would
“ have caused the treatise on *the Necessity of*
“ *Revelation* to have been no more heard of.

“ I have read your Reflections many
“ times over, and always with fresh pleasure;
“ as I should the subject you give me
“ leave to hope for, with much more than
“ in writing myself upon it, which I cer-
“ tainly never shall do, while I have any
“ hopes from you.

“ But I would not have you mistake me.
“ I think with you, that the law of nature
“ was sufficiently propagated to the heathen
“ world. If the philosophers of Greece
“ abused that natural light by false science,

“ they deserved the Apostle’s censure, that,
“ esteeming themselves wise, they became
“ fools. It is beginning, I think, at the
“ wrong end, to inquire, whether this or
“ that representation of antiquity be most
“ useful to religion. We should first en-
“ deavour to know whether the representa-
“ tion be true. If it be found so, and
“ Christianity be true, we may safely pro-
“ nounce it useful to it ; because one truth
“ is always useful to another.

“ If indeed Christianity be false, an honest
“ man won’t much concern himself about
“ what either serves or disserves it. The
“ contrary conclusion is to be made, if the
“ representation be found to be false. There-
“ fore I can by no means approve of
“ Fabricius’s judgment, in your concluding
“ quotation,* though very much of your’s
“ who so appositely give it. For it is a
“ very good argument *ad homines*. For the
“ men you are arguing against are not in
“ their intention supporting truth, but their
“ own religion.

* See Note II.

“ I have little or no literary news worth
“ sending you ; which I am sure, to one of
“ your turn, would be the most acceptable
“ kind of news. But learning is in Eng-
“ land in a most deplorable condition. The
“ books which daily come out, are either
“ miserable common-place collections, on
“ the one hand, which are called learning ;
“ or crude, extravagant whimsies and para-
“ doxes, on the other, which are called
“ science.

“ The truth is, there being with us large
“ honours for men of learned professions,
“ and nothing for men of learning, it is no
“ wonder that men should turn all their
“ studies to those arts, which (to distinguish
“ them from those termed *liberal*) we call
“ *the arts of rising*. Whereas with you,
“ there being little encouragement to the
“ learned professions, learned men are not
“ tempted off from letters ; which is the
“ reason why at this time every branch of
“ science flourishes better in the north than
“ in the south. For what would a warm
“ sun signify to plants, in a country where

“ it only nourished weeds ? The most it
“ would do, would be but making the plants
“ degenerate into weeds.

“ The only good book that has been
“ published of late is *the new Dunciad*,
“ which is a satire on this *rara temporum*
“ *felicitas*. And as a certain proof that
“ that age of dulness is commenced, which
“ is there sung of, this incomparable poem
“ is generally misunderstood.

“ In the midst of all this dulness, you
“ will no longer wonder at so rambling and
“ incoherent a letter ; which, if it can but tell
“ you how much I desire and shall honour
“ your correspondence and friendship, will
“ do all that I expect from it ; being, with the
“ greatest truth, Dear Sir, your very obliged
“ and most affectionate and obedient ser-
“ vant,

W. WARBURTON.

“ Please to direct for me thus, “ To the
“ Rev. Mr Warburton, Newark, in Notting-
“ hamshire.”

Dr Warburton's prejudices and his peculiarities are both visible in this letter. His contempt for all the learning which did not

coincide with his own studies and opinions, detracts considerably from his compliment to the literature of Scotland, where he had few or no opponents ; and, of course, it lessens the weight of his remarks on the decline of English literature.

Pope's *Dunciad* had been published as early as 1728. But a new book was added to it in 1742 ; and a new edition of the whole poem was published at the same time, with many alterations and additions. This Warburton, at whose suggestion the additional book had been written, describes by the title of " *The New Dunciad*," as the only good book which had lately come from the English press.

That the execution of this poem, of which Dr Johnson says, " that it is one of the "greatest and most elaborate of its author's "performances," is entitled to all the celebrity which has been given to it, cannot be denied. But neither the poetical preeminence of its author, nor the sterling vigour and elegance of his descriptions, have ever persuaded the public to recognise either

the candid criticism, the liberal opinions, or the useful morality, which Pope affirmed, and Warburton believed it to contain.

Warburton tells his correspondent (as Pope himself affected to say) that the poem was misunderstood; and both of them impute this to the dulness of the age. They did not, however, convince the world, that the real intention of the poem was different from the general impression which every intelligent reader receives from it; or that what was originally intended as a keen and virulent invective, could at last be converted into useful or moral instruction.

There was a time when even Warburton would have held a different language with regard to Pope, and perhaps of the *Dunciad* itself: for he was once associated with Theobald in writing notes upon Shakspear. "I know," says Dr Hurd, in a letter to Warburton of 1757, "the reason of your former distaste of Mr Pope. It was not only his connections with some you had reason to think ill of, but his abuse of

“one you loved. Was not this the best of reasons?”*

At the commencement of his correspondence with Dr Erskine, there was a host of opponents to Dr Warburton's doctrines; and though Dr Erskine's Dissertation did not comprehend the chief points in controversy, it relates to one of the doctrines which he had most zealously maintained; and, within a small compass, it places his view of the subject in a clearer and more forcible light, than any in which he himself has presented it.

Warburton expresses the gratification which this publication had given him, with all the warmth of his temper; aware of the learning and acuteness of his coadjutor, and very desirous to urge him to prosecute the subject farther, as it is evident he had once intended.

He regrets, with great reason, the form in which Dr Erskine had published his Dissertation; which must certainly have

* Letters of Warburton and Hurd, p. 231.

been greatly against its favourable reception, either in England or Scotland. The Edinburgh press had then no part of the celebrity which it has since obtained ; and this publication had not even all the advantage which a respectable Edinburgh printer might have given it.

Dr Erskine was perhaps less attentive than he should have been to circumstances of this kind, at every period of his life. The idea of rendering his productions accessible to every order of the people, gave him a perpetual inclination to publish whatever he wrote, in the cheapest, and, of course, in the most disadvantageous form. And yet it is obvious, that, if such an idea should have been at any time excluded from his thoughts, it should naturally have been so when he published this pamphlet ; the subject of which was much more above the reach of the people at large, than almost any thing else which he afterwards printed. It was so much more addressed to the learned than to any other class of

readers, that its circulation must have been, in a great measure, confined to them.

If his first publication had issued from the London press, and from the shop of a London bookseller, instead of being published with every possible disadvantage at Edinburgh, there can be no reason to doubt, when the merit of his argument is considered, that, at a time when the subject was the controversy of the day, it would have attracted much more of the attention of the public than it obtained, and would have conferred much more than it did of celebrity on its author.

The following letter from Dr Warburton may also be inserted here, though some parts of it will require to be explained. It is dated at Newark, February 20, 1744.

“DEAR SIR,—I should have made my acknowledgments for the favour of your obliging letter of the 26th of last September long ere now, was I only on the formal footing of a commerce of letters with you.

“I heartily felicitate you on your choice

“ of the better part.* You have an advancement that numbers may envy, in going to divinity from the study of the civil law. For what the great Cujacius said, speaking to his son of these studies, I think is very true: *Sine quibus æqui et boni quoque speciem comprehenderit vix unquam quisque bene, nec si se dederit totum philosophiæ, nec si literis sacris.*

“ I am pleased too with your new choice on another account,—you will now be at leisure to digest those just and noble thoughts which you have on the most important subject of antiquity ; and I beg leave to urge and press you to pursue them. One who can write with that learning, precision, and force of reason, with which you confuted Campbell, ought never to have his pen out of his hand.

“ By the way, I wish you would be so good as to favour me with another copy of that excellent pamphlet. It may be left for me, at Mr Knapton’s, bookseller, London.

* This alludes to Dr Erskine’s resolution to become a clergyman.

“ What you say of the state of learning
 “ and religion among you, is very curious,
 “ but very melancholy. I find there is not
 “ a reigning folly, or perversity, among our
 “ clergy, but yours have got it. The pa-
 “ ganized Christian divines you speak of,
 “ are what formerly passed among us un-
 “ der the name of the *Latitudinarian*, of
 “ late *Bangorian* divines. But Socinus lies
 “ at the root. I think Toland was not
 “ much out when he said, *The Mahometans*
 “ *were a sort of Christians, and not the worst*
 “ *sort neither*. In another thing, too, they
 “ perfectly agree with ours, and that is, in
 “ the large extent of their consciences as
 “ well as thoughts.

“ However, I think the next you men-
 “ tion are of still a more dangerous sort of
 “ madmen, with their *γραμματοφοβία* ; those
 “ who fear to touch upon letters at all. In-
 “ deed, the other sort have shewn, that

“ Their shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,

“ But drinking largely sobers us again.

“ I am glad to hear what you say in con-
 “ futation of the charge of methodism and

“ enthusiasm. It requires care to keep the
“ inflamed spirit of piety within bounds;

“ For Virtue’s self may too much zeal be had;

“ The worst of madmen is a saint run mad.

“ What you tell me of your resolution
“ not to write any more on the subject I so
“ much recommend to you, gives me real
“ concern; and will continue to do so, till
“ you give me to understand, that you have
“ something of an important nature, though
“ of another kind, in projection. For you
“ have talents to be of great use in this
“ way, in God’s church; and I shall al-
“ ways think you misuse them, if you do
“ not employ them in this more public me-
“ thod of instruction.

“ I have a particular pleasure in your
“ approbation of my two sermons, for they
“ are more than ordinary my favourites.

“ To your question of the remainder of
“ the ‘ Divine Legation,’ I will refer you
“ to a controversial pamphlet, which I am
“ just about publishing, and shall take care
“ to have it conveyed₁ to you.—I am, Dear

“ Sir, with the truest esteem, your very affectionate and faithful humble servant,

“ W. WARBURTON.”

Before the date of this letter, though after the date of that to which it was a reply, Dr Erskine had taken his final resolution to enter into the church, and had already been licensed to preach. He had corresponded before with Dr Warburton on the subject of his profession, though this part of the correspondence has not been preserved.

In applauding his resolution, Warburton estimates justly the advantage which he possessed, from his previous studies in the civil law. But, in stating the literary leisure which he supposed him to acquire from the profession he had chosen, though his conclusion is sufficiently correct, he was not perhaps fully aware of the difference in the situations of the clergy in England and Scotland.

In England, where a great proportion of the pastoral duty may at all times be devolved on the curates, the learned rector

or vicar has certainly many advantages for literary industry. In Scotland, where every clergyman has the pastoral duty of a parish constantly depending on his personal labours, and cannot, for any length of time, delegate the service for which he is personally responsible, the clerical function does not, at first view, seem to present the same facilities for the researches of literature, which the beneficed clergyman of the south, who makes literature his object, might in almost any situation command.

It is equally true, on the other hand, that any disadvantage resulting from the personal attention required from the Scotch clergy to their parochial duties, is more than compensated by the effect of their constant residence on their benefices, to withdraw them from the pursuits and associations of those who live more in the world; and, if they have any turn for literature, to confirm them in habits of study and research suited to their profession.

The closest attention to his professional duties will seldom indeed be found to in-

terfere with any degree of literary industry which a well-informed clergyman, who has an active mind, feels himself inclined to employ. The clerical function has, in all situations, been considered as presenting both incitements and favourable opportunities for literary pursuits; and it has this character as incontrovertibly in Scotland, as in any other country in Christendom.

It is to be regretted that we have not Dr Erskine's letters, to which Dr Warburton replied. But it is easy to see, that the divines whom he had described as *paganized*, were exactly such men as Warburton conceived them; preachers who affected to use the style and tone of the ancient philosophers more than the language of Christ or his apostles.

There was certainly in Scotland, at this time, a class of preachers who, besides the absurd affectation of bringing their public instructions from Socrates, Plato, or Seneca, rather than from the morality of the Gospel, distinguished themselves by an ostentatious imitation of the doctrines and

phraseology of Francis Hutcheson and the Earl of Shaftesbury ; writers whom Warburton frequently mentions, both in his “ Divine Legation,” and in his correspondence with Hurd, as having had the same influence in England to pervert the taste and the opinions of his countrymen ; and sometimes even in terms, which might have led his readers to suppose that he had designed to represent the clerical admirers of those philosophers as hostile to the authority of Christianity, instead of intending to promote its interests.

Hutcheson was certainly no unbeliever. On the contrary, he always avowed a firm conviction of the truth of Christianity, and was a zealous friend to its institutions and its progress.

Nor had Warburton himself a different idea of him ; though his contempt for the servility of his literary or clerical imitators provoked him to use expressions which seemed to class him with the herd of free-thinkers. *

Whatever Lord Shaftesbury’s infidelity

* See Note I.

was, he was certainly no Socinian. And when Warburton, in remarking on the paganized divines, said that *Socinus lay at the root*, if he referred to Shaftesbury at all, he must have referred rather to his clerical disciples, than to their master.

The Scotch divines, who were more solicitous to be distinguished as philosophers than as ministers of the Gospel, and who, in their public discourses, affected to be imitators either of Hutcheson or Shaftesbury, certainly deserved both reprehension and contempt, for the prostitution of the pulpit to the useless and unnatural semblance of philosophy, which they substituted for Christian doctrine.* But it would have been unjust to accuse them of heresies. Their peculiarities were adopted rather that they might be believed to be, if not original and profound, at least ingenious or fashionable thinkers, than from any systematic hostility to Christian doctrine. They preached for fame more than for usefulness ; though, among their parishioners, they were common-

* See Note K.

ly as far from reaching the one as the other. They were generally young and inexperienced preachers, who were seduced by fashion and example, rather than by any other cause, from the sobriety and good sense of their fathers. In many instances, they were destitute neither of spirit nor of talents. But, as frequently happens with young men, their pretensions were above their knowledge ; and their love of singularity and distinction had more influence on their manners and opinions, than was quite consistent either with the design or the usefulness of their office.

Many of the individuals alluded to lived to adopt better views, both of religion and of common life ; and afterwards distinguished themselves as sober-minded and learned, as well as useful and conscientious clergymen.

There might be exceptions in many points, from this general account. But there is a fashion in philosophy, and in theology, as well as in other things ; and for more than half a century, neither Hutche-

son nor Shaftesbury has found his way to a pulpit in Scotland.

Warburton sets down the terms *Latitudinarian* or *Bangorian* as equivalent to Dr Erskine's term of *paganized*, in applying this description to a considerable class of preachers in England.

The current, both of manners and opinions within the two churches, is not precisely the same in later times. The present race of divines profess to adhere more closely to the articles of their church, than was at least quite general during some part of the last century. Their controversies seem to turn more on the original meaning of their articles, than on questions relating to their authority ; and, according to the views which they take of them, they discover more zeal in maintaining them, than was commonly shewn in the beginning of Warburton's life.

The *γραμματοφοβία* stigmatized by Warburton, is more or less common in every church, and is peculiar to none. It comprehends the least respectable of all the

classes which are alluded to, if it describes the illiterate, the careless, and the idle, who come into the pastoral office, not only without the qualifications which it requires, but without any effectual solicitude to possess them.

There is one subject more referred to in Warburton's second letter, in which it is not probable that he would have agreed as cordially with his correspondent as he professes, if it had been freely discussed between them. It relates to the charge of methodism and enthusiasm, as existing in Scotland, which it appears Dr Erskine had endeavoured to refute.

This subject is of considerable interest; and, as it had an intimate connection with some of the leading facts in Dr Erskine's life, it will require to be both fully and dispassionately considered.

But, as many of its most important circumstances occurred after he became a minister, it will at least be proper to postpone it, till some account has been given of his introduction into the church, and of the early part of his pastoral life.

CHAP. III.

*Dr Erskine's first Charge in the Church.—
His Pastoral Duty.—His Society at Kirk-
intilloch.—His Marriage.*

DR ERSKINE received his licence to preach in 1743, from the presbytery of Dunblane, within the bounds of which his father's most considerable estate was situated. His first sermon in public was delivered in the parish church of Torrieburn, of which the patronage afterwards belonged to himself.

The text which he selected on that occasion (Psalm lxxxiv. 10.) was well suited to the temper of his own mind, and to the circumstances in which he had devoted himself to the service of the church. “A day
“in thy courts is better than a thousand :
“I had rather be a door-keeper in the
“house of my God, than dwell in the tents
“of wickedness.”

The sermon has been found among his papers, and bears intrinsic marks of the peculiar views and talents of the author. It discovers the same vein of genuine piety, the same variety of practical instruction, the same good sense and acute discrimination in representing the characters of common life, which distinguish almost all his discourses. And, what is not the least remarkable circumstance, though he was then only in his twenty-third year, there is in no part of it the least attempt at juvenile display or embellishment, so frequently observed at that period of life. He addressed himself directly to the understandings and the consciences of his hearers; and every thing which he said must have left them with this impression, that he had no concern on his mind as strong as his sense of the duty which he was discharging, and his solicitude to promote their edification.

The sermon, though not in every respect equal to his later productions, is no unfavourable specimen of the general spirit of

his public discourses, or of the purity and earnestness which all of them discover.

He had embraced the office of a preacher, from a deliberate conviction of its importance to the present and eternal welfare of mankind ; and, on this occasion, he appears to have spoken as one who felt the responsibility of his situation, and who “ commended himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

From his first appearance as a preacher, he was so generally acceptable to every class of hearers, that, in the view of becoming a parish minister, he had rather to select the parish which was most agreeable to himself, than wait for the patronage of any individual. The church of Tulliallan, of which his father was the patron, and which lies between the burgh of Culross and the county town of Clackmannan, was then vacant ; and much solicitude was expressed, both by the parishioners and by the clergy of the presbytery of Dumblane, to which it belongs, that he should have been placed in that situation.

It appears, by a letter from Mr Napier of Kilnadock, an old and venerable clergyman of that time, who belonged to the presbytery, (dated December 9, 1743,) that his grandfather, Colonel Erskine, who died this year, had favoured this idea; but that both Dr Erskine himself and his father were averse to it, and preferred another situation.

At this distance, it is not easy to perceive the grounds on which they decided. The parish of Tulliallan seems to have every local advantage, and is in one of the best districts of the country with which they were most intimately connected. But it might have been, with Dr Erskine, a serious objection, that his father was the chief proprietor of the parish; and both of them might perhaps reasonably imagine, that he would have more comfort in his pastoral duties, in a situation in which he could have no secular interests to affect his intercourse with the people.

He soon after accepted of the parish of Kirkintilloch, in the neighbourhood of

Glasgow, which, though not in the immediate vicinity, is at no great distance from his father's principal seat. He was inducted to this charge in May 1744; and, during the nine years in which he held it, it would be difficult to say, whether he was most distinguished by the fervour, the assiduity, or the ability, with which he applied himself to every department of his pastoral duty.

In a large parish, such as Kirkintilloch, where every part of the clerical functions devolves on a single clergyman, the composition of sermons, and the official duties of the Lord's day, are neither the only, nor perhaps the most important, branches of pastoral labour. The visitation of the sick and of the dying, equally useful and consolatory, is a labour of perpetual recurrence; and it is in no country of Christendom more faithfully attended to than in Scotland.

But the private instruction given by the parish minister to the whole body of the parishioners, in their separate houses, and in their scattered villages, is a service still

more extensively useful, and not less faithfully performed.

The general practice in parochial visitations is in substance this: In the course of every year, a clergyman is understood to visit the families of his parish individually; when he catechises the children and the servants, and afterwards addresses, to all the members of each family, a solemn admonition on the subjects best suited to their conditions and to their practical duties; which he concludes with an affectionate prayer for their temporal and eternal welfare. If there should be any thing in the circumstances of particular families, which appears to him to demand either advice or reprobation, he has in the course of this service fair opportunities of conveying the counsel which they have most need to receive, in the form least likely to prevent its effect. He converses with them at the same time on every subject, by means of which he can render his pastoral visits either gratifying or useful.

By this intimate communication with every class of his parishioners in their own

families, if he manages it with good sense and delicacy, a respectable clergyman has perpetual opportunities of becoming thoroughly acquainted with their several characters, and with every circumstance in their conditions, of which he can avail himself in public or in private for their advantage. Without descending from his own situation, he comes from habit, as well as principle, to regard their interests with a paternal solicitude, and they are soon accustomed to look up to him as a friend or as a father; as their enlightened adviser and guide, as well as their religious instructor and comforter.

Besides the visitation of families, a clergyman in the country is accustomed to hold regular diets of catechising in the several villages of his parish, where he meets as many of his parishioners together as can be easily assembled in one place.

In this department of pastoral duty, an intelligent minister does not confine himself to the church catechism, or to any printed catechisms whatever; but while

he pays as much attention to the catechisms in use as to see that they are familiar to the people, if he does justice to his office, his instruction is directed to every subject of religion and morals, which he thinks best adapted to their capacities and situations.

His catechetical questions, indiscriminately addressed to the old and to the young, embrace, as far as the time he must prescribe to himself will permit, whatever he can render level to the capacities of the people, or is calculated to enlighten them, in the history of the Bible, in the evidence, the doctrines, or the practical duties of Christianity. It is his object, above all, to make them well acquainted with the Scriptures ; and, as far as he can assist them, to accustom them to refer to them readily.

In some parishes it is the practice, besides, to catechise the communicants separately ; and the clergy are universally accustomed to converse privately with those who are admitted to the communion-table for the first time.

Without mentioning the care of the poor,

or the management of the church discipline, which are chiefly devolved on the parish ministers, this is a general outline of pastoral duty, as it has been conducted in Scotland for more than a century. The labour of every year, and (speaking generally) of every parish, is substantially the same.

Allowance must, no doubt, be made for differences in the manner of conducting every department of parochial service, created by the local peculiarities of parishes, as well as by their unequal extent, and by the varieties which are always to be expected in the age or the activity of individual ministers.

The same duty cannot be done within a district of twenty or thirty miles, intersected by lakes or rivers, which can be easily accomplished within the limits of five or ten miles, of a contiguous and cultivated country. Nor can the same justice be done to a population of 35,000, or even of 15,000, which is practicable in a parish consisting of 500, or even of 1500 souls.*

* There must, indeed, be considerable varieties in the management of different parishes, not only arising from their

But the substance, though not perhaps all the particulars, in the detail which has been given, is annually verified in every quarter of Scotland. Every Scotsman who is well acquainted with the habits and manners of his countrymen, and who is qualified to give a fair opinion, must be prepared to admit, that the distinction which Scots-

peculiar situations, but from the age, and from the different talents of individual ministers. It is related in the life of Jonathan Edwards, (printed at Edinburgh in 1764, p. 57, 58,) that he declined the visitation of his hearers from house to house, under a persuasion that he did not possess the talents by which many of his brethren were distinguished, of conversing with the people with ease and familiarity, so as either to promote their edification, or to satisfy his own mind.

He therefore preferred the mode of bringing them frequently together in considerable numbers and preaching to them; and when he did communicate with them personally on their religious interests, of conversing with them in his own house, rather than in their families. He faithfully visited the sick. But with regard to persons in good health, he did not feel that he possessed the talents requisite to render his private intercourse with them, at their own houses, either satisfactory to himself or useful to them.

Though the general plan of parochial visitations, which has been mentioned, has certainly many advantages, and should not be wantonly neglected, there must of necessity be a certain discretion supposed, suited to the circumstances of every place, and to the tempers and talents of individual ministers.

men of the lowest ranks receive, when they go out into the world, from their intelligence, from their sobriety, from their subordination, and, in general, from their good morals, is in no small degree to be imputed to the conscientious labours of the parochial clergy, who have watched and instructed them from their earliest years.

They have certainly at the same time the benefit of the parish schools, and derive from them advantages, both in morals and religion, which the inhabitants of no other country in Christendom have yet possessed in the same degree. But it must not be forgotten, that the labours of the pastor among the old and the young, give energy and substance to the education of the schools, and direct the application of the information which has been there acquired, so as to render it both more correct, and much more permanently efficient, than it would otherwise become, among the different classes of the people.

This view of clerical labours in Scotland is neither useless in itself, nor foreign

to the subject of this memoir. An order of ministers who hold themselves pledged, not only to make faithful preparation for the weekly service of the Lord's day, but to discharge the private duties of their function on such a plan as has been specified, of which much has been omitted and nothing exaggerated, ought to have equal claims to the respect and to the confidence of their country. And the detail of their labours will not be uninteresting, as long as their effects are visible in the conduct of Scotsmen, in almost every quarter of the world.

Dr Erskine began his ministry at Kirkintilloch, fully aware of the extent of the duties which he undertook to perform ; and he applied his mind to them, not only with the most scrupulous exactness, but with the most anxious and conscientious activity.

The publication of his sermons, many of which were preached at Kirkintilloch, has enabled every judicious reader to appreciate the nature of his preparations for the pulpit ; and they who have been acquaint-

ed with the ardour of his studies in the end of his days, can estimate the industry with which he must have applied to them in the prime of life.

The singleness and sincerity of his zeal for the temporal and eternal interests of the people entrusted to his care, made every other consideration give way, not only to his theological and practical studies, but to the minutest offices of pastoral duty. The keenness of his natural temper, combined with the acuteness of his talents, must, in the vigour of youth, have rendered both his public ministrations and his parochial labours equally interesting and impressive; supported, as they were, by the great solicitude of his life, to become a successful instrument in promoting the glory of God, and the instruction and salvation of human beings.

During the two first years of his residence at Kirkintilloch he continued a bachelor, and his house was the resort of the most intimate companions of his youth. Among these, none of the least distinguish-

ed were Alexander Tait, (afterwards one of the Principal Clerks of Session,) and James Hall, son of Sir James Hall of Dunglas. The easy and delightful terms in which they lived with him, are well described in a letter from Mr Tait written at this time, while Mr Hall was on a visit at Kirkintilloch. The cheerfulness of temper and warmth of attachment which so remarkably distinguished Dr Erskine through life, must at this early period have rendered his intercourse with those friends of his youth most peculiarly interesting.

But neither youthful ardour nor warm attachments, even when they are supported by the best virtues and intentions of human life, can secure the permanency of the satisfactions derived from them. Dr Erskine had soon to lament one of the greatest calamities of his early years, in the untimely death of his friend Mr Hall.

Mr Hall was three years younger than himself; and at the time of his death was a student of divinity, applying with equal earnestness to theological studies and

practical religion. They had lived in the closest habits of friendship for upwards of two years ; for their intimacy does not appear to have had an earlier date. They had probably been attracted to each other by the similarity in their views and situations, as well as by the obvious resemblance in their characters.

Mr Hall had been originally intended for a mercantile life, and had with this view been for some time employed in the counting-house of Mr William Hogg, then a considerable merchant in Edinburgh. But he had a predominant inclination for the office of a clergyman, which soon determined him to apply to the study of divinity ; and in the end of 1743, at the age of nineteen, he had relinquished every other pursuit.

From this time, till his death, in October 1745, Dr Erskine appears to have lived with him in the most intimate habits of confidence and affection. Their application to the same studies—their common solicitude for the best interests of religion—and the intimate communication of their thoughts

and feelings, (which they appear to have indulged without reserve,) gave their intercourse a value and an interest, which, after the death of Mr Hall, could not be soon compensated to the survivor.

They were together for the last time on the 9th of September 1745, when Dr Erskine was accidentally in Edinburgh. The public convulsions, occasioned by the rebellion of that year, were already begun ; and Dr Erskine afterwards deeply regretted, that on that day he had resisted the solicitations of his friend to accompany him to Stirling on a visit to Colonel Gardiner,—that venerable man who was so eminently distinguished by his military conduct, and by his Christian character,—before he set out for the battle of Preston, where he lost his life, on the 21st of September, in circumstances which will transmit his name with honour to the latest periods of our history. Dr Erskine could not then conveniently accompany him, and returned to Kirkintilloch.

Mr Hall was soon after seized with a malignant fever, which Providence did not

permit him to survive. From the disorders which then existed in the country, and the difficulty of all internal communication, occasioned by the rebellion, Dr Erskine did not even hear of his illness till the very night on which he died.

Soon after his death, he published (in 1746,) a few fragments of the letters and studies of his friend, to which he prefixed a short memoir, containing affectionate reflections on his death and character. What they had been to one another, may be seen from the following extract, taken from his account of Mr Hall's friendship to him, which he appears to have experienced in some instances of most peculiar interest and delicacy.

“ Never was there a soul,” he says, “ more
“ susceptible of friendship, or endowed with
“ more of a tender, affectionate, and sym-
“ pathising disposition. My intimate cor-
“ respondence with him for two years and
“ a half gave me peculiar proofs of this ;
“ and some of the instances of his friend-
“ ship were such as, I believe, can scarce-

“ ly find a parallel, either in ancient or modern times ; though I have reasons for not being more particular on this head. To him, in every distress and perplexity, with freedom I could unbosom my most hidden pains, without the least doubt of their remaining as secret as if they had been confined within my own breast. He felt my joys and sorrows as if they had been his own. He kindly warned me of whatever he thought amiss in my conduct, and took it well when I used the same freedom with him. I can never be sufficiently thankful that God ever favoured me with such a friend, and gave me such peculiar advantages for knowing his worth, and improving by his conversation and example. The least circumstance that concerned his friend was not disregarded by him.”

The similarity of their views and situations, and especially of their ultimate destination to the church, was probably the origin, and certainly added greatly to the intimacy, of a friendship which is thus tenderly and pathetically described.

The personal and religious character of Mr Hall—the mildness of his temper—the singleness of his views and pursuits—the fervour of his piety—the fidelity of his friendship—and the sincerity of his zeal for the progress of genuine Christianity,—are strikingly exemplified in the fragments collected from his papers, as well as in the affectionate memoir which introduces them. His untimely death must have been deeply regretted by his personal friends, and by every one who had had an opportunity of estimating the expectation he had given, of usefulness or eminence in the church of Christ.

Prefixed to Dr Erskine's account of him we find the following striking quotations from Virgil and Cicero:

“Ostendunt terris hunc tantum fata, nec ultra esse sinent.”

VIRGIL.

“O preclarum diem, cum ad illud divinum animorum concilium, cætumque proficiscor, et cum ex hac turba et colluvione discedam! Proficiscar enim non ad eos solum viros, de quibus ante dixi, sed

“ etiam ad Catonem meum, quo nemo vir
“ melior natus est, nemo pietate præstan-
“ tior. Cujus a me corpus crematum est ;
“ quod contra decuit ab illo meum. Ani-
“ mus vero non me deserens, sed respec-
“ tans, in ea profecto loca discessit, quo
“ mihi ipse cernebat esse veniendum. Quem
“ ego meum casum fortiter ferre visus sum ;
“ non quod æquo animo ferrem ; sed me
“ ipse consolabar, existimans non longin-
“ quum inter nos digressum et discessum
“ fore.”—*Cicero de Senectute.*

Dr Erskine's name does not appear on the title-page of this publication, which is merely announced as the writing of “a friend in the country.” His heart was in the subject, though his modesty led him to withhold his name.*

The clerical society to which his situation at Kirkintilloch introduced him, was equally suited to his taste and to his studies. It would not be easy to mention more respectable names than those of Mr

* See Note L.

John Maclaurin, not less distinguished as a divine than his brother Colin Maclaurin was as a mathematician; of Dr William Leechman, then Professor of Divinity, and afterwards Principal of the University of Glasgow, a man of primitive and apostolic manners, equally distinguished by his love of literature, and his liberal opinions; of Dr John Gillies, whose pastoral labours were only surpassed by his learning, and by the native cheerfulness, simplicity, and sincerity of his life; of Dr John Hamilton, then in the Barony parish, and afterwards in the High Church of Glasgow, as eminent for the soundness and vigour of his understanding, as for the steadiness and respectability of his pastoral character; of Dr John Corse, who, with some formality of manner, had the aspect of a gentleman, united to the elegance of a scholar, and the sincerity of a Christian divine.

With these and such men, it may well be supposed, that, residing within a few miles of Glasgow, he had advantages for the intercourse of private life suited to his habits

and pursuits, which few other situations at a distance from the metropolis would have afforded him. Excepting Mr Maclaurin, who was much farther advanced, all the individuals who have been mentioned were nearly of his own age; and they were all united, not only in the same love of literature, and in the same studies, but in the same general views, of pastoral duty, and in the same active solicitude to promote the best interests of mankind.

It is not surprising that he should have been much attached to the society of such associates. He was always accustomed to mention his intercourse with them with peculiar relish; and it is more than probable, that, had he followed his inclination, he would have embraced an opportunity, which appears to have been afterwards in his power, of fixing his residence in Glasgow. His last visit at a distance from home was paid to Dr Gillies, who survived the rest, and of whose life he published, in 1796, a short but affectionate memoir.

On the 15th of June 1746, he married the Honourable Christian Mackay, third daughter, by his third wife, of George, the third Lord Reay,—the representative of a family, whose property is situated at the northern extremity of Scotland, and which, like the family of Sutherland, whose estate is contiguous, has been uniformly, in all its branches, attached to the Protestant succession in the house of Hanover, of which they have been, at all times, zealous and active supporters.

From his marriage, he received the advantages of domestic society in no common degree; and Providence permitted him to enjoy them to the end of his life. Mrs Erskine was distinguished by a sound and cultivated understanding; by genuine and unostentatious piety, guided by great good sense and discernment; by uniform mildness and equality of temper; and by those habitually cheerful and affectionate manners, which commanded the esteem and respect of the society in which she lived,

and were the perpetual delight of her own family.

No man could enjoy the comforts of domestic life with more visible satisfaction than Dr Erskine. But he never allowed himself to be so much engrossed, either by his private feelings or his domestic occupations, as in any degree to be diverted from the ardent prosecution of his literary and theological studies, or to relax the activity with which he co-operated in every design, which had for its object, either the prosperity of human life, or the encouragement and progress of practical religion.

CHAP. IV.

Rise of the Methodists in England.—Mr Whitefield's arrival in Scotland.—His first Connection with the Scotch Seceders.—His singular Labours at Cambuslang, &c.—Dr Erskine's Publications on this subject.

THERE is a subject alluded to in the second letter from Dr Warburton, which, at this time, occupied no small share of Dr Erskine's attention, and which appears to have created a very general interest in Scotland.

John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield, after having formed the religious association at Oxford by which they were first brought into notice, had, some years before this date, commenced their career as field-preachers in England. By their zeal and popularity, they attracted such a multitude of followers, as soon enabled them to form a sect, which has ever since been known by the general name of *Methodists*, and which

now comprehends the most considerable body of his Majesty's subjects, who have either differed or separated from the established church. The designation of *Methodists* was assumed by themselves, from certain *methods* or *rules* of living, by which they were originally distinguished at Oxford.

The Wesleys, though at first associated with Whitefield, ultimately separated from him, chiefly on account of the different opinions which they adopted with regard to the points in controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians. John Wesley, who was the chief writer, though he was not always consistent with himself, asserted the Arminian tenets. Whitefield adhered to the doctrines of Calvin, which he affirmed to be the doctrines of the church of England. Wesley had the address to adjust the form, and sometimes even the substance, of his doctrines to suit the taste of his audience. Whitefield sturdily maintained, wherever he preached, the same undisguised and unvaried tenets of Calvinistic theo-

logy, as the doctrines of Christ and his apostles. From these distinctions have risen the two descriptions of Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodists.

Wesley had more literature than Whitefield, and could speak with more classical correctness. But Whitefield, who was far from being illiterate, appears to have had powers of speaking, not only more commanding and impressive than Wesley's, but such as raised him above every other popular preacher of his time. Wesley himself is compelled to admit the effect of his eloquence, amidst all the improprieties of manner and language which he imputes to him.* But his preaching powers had a more decisive attestation, from the multitudes who heard him with equal astonishment and conviction; and from the visible and permanent effects which his labours appear to have produced on their characters.

After their separation, Wesley complain-

* Wesley's Journal.

ed that Whitefield had written against him ; and he would have persuaded him *to meet him half way*, (as he chose to express himself,) so that they should not preach against one another, and should conceal from the public the difference in their theological opinions.* Whitefield, whom, for this reason, Warburton pronounces of the two “the honester man,” † disdained to compromise what he believed to be important articles in the revelation of God ; and from this time, the private intercourse between these champions of methodism, as well as the public connection of their labours, was, if not entirely, in a great measure, dissolved.

Mr Whitefield came to Scotland, for the first time, in 1741 ; and as his labours there had an intimate connection with some leading facts in the life of Dr Erskine, it is necessary to represent the circumstances which attended them in more detail, than, on other accounts, would have been requisite.

* Wesley's Journal.

† Warburton on the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit.

No general declamations against methodism or enthusiasm, or against the peculiar defects or weaknesses, imputed either to the substance or the form of George Whitefield's ministrations, can destroy the evidence of the fact, that they made a powerful and lasting impression on great multitudes of men, and on men of cultivated understandings, as well as on the vulgar.

The fame of his success as a popular preacher in England and America, (for he had been in America before this time,) had induced individuals of different persuasions, and, in particular, a class of ministers who had lately seceded from the established church,* to invite him earnestly to Scotland; from an expectation, that he might be as successful in promoting the revival of religion there, as they believed him to have been in England and America; and, on the part of the seceders besides, that, by means of his popularity, directed by them, they might gain both attention and influence to their infant sect.

* For the origin of the secession, see Appendix.

His correspondents among the seceding clergy had not concealed from him the scheme which they had formed, that his ministrations in Scotland should be confined to their own sect. Nor, on the other hand, had he disguised to them his general resolution to preach, without distinction, with every order of ministers who should invite him, and to all who were willing to hear him. That there might be no misunderstanding between them, he had told them explicitly, that he had not the least idea of confining himself within the narrow trammels of any sect. *

Though there was no ambiguity in his part of the correspondence, the leaders of the secession, from a natural partiality to a sect with which they had almost brought themselves to identify Christianity, had notwithstanding flattered themselves, that, when he should be among them, and should become acquainted with the real state of religious parties in Scotland, they would not find it

* See in the collection of his letters, Letter 280, to Ebenezer Erskine.

difficult to persuade him to enter into their views.

They did not immediately relinquish this expectation. Mr Whitefield preached first of all in their pulpits ; and on one occasion Mr Ralph Erskine, one of their most considerable leaders, accompanied him to the pulpit of the Canongate Church of Edinburgh. But they soon began to perceive, that his general views were not likely to coalesce with theirs ; and they held a solemn meeting at Dunfermline on purpose to reason with him on the subject.

Their conversation on this occasion began indeed with a weak and useless attempt to persuade him of the unlawfulness of episcopacy, and to give him their own ideas of church government. And when nothing which they could say on these topics made the least impression, it terminated in what they had chiefly in view, in a direct proposal, that, in Scotland, he should, at least for the present, preach only for them. “Why should I preach only for you?” said Mr Whitefield.—“Because,” replied Mr Ralph

Erskine, "we are the Lord's people."—"But," said Mr Whitefield, "has the Lord no other "people than yourselves? and, supposing "that all others were the devil's people, have "not they so much the more need to be "preached to, and, shall I say nothing to "them?"*

The effect of this conference, as might have been naturally supposed, was a final breach between Mr Whitefield and the seceding clergy. From that time, they not only disavowed all connection with him, but preached against him publicly, and even went so far as to stigmatize him as an agent of the devil. They had been so long accustomed to declaim against the corruptions of the established church, and to represent them as so inveterate, that nothing good could be connected with her ministrations,—that they could not but perceive how much the singular effects of Mr Whitefield's labours, in connection with her, might seem to contradict the doctrines which they had so zealously inculcated,

* See Whitefield's Letters, and Gillies's Life of Whitefield.

with regard to her inefficiency, and, in this way, to lessen their reputation and influence among the people.

This idea, co-operating with Mr Whitefield's refusal to confine his ministrations to their sect, produced a degree of violence in their opposition to him, for which moderate men, among themselves, would now find it difficult to frame an apology. Strong passions and keen tempers, irritated by party interests and contentions, even the best of men are unable entirely to control. The ministers of the secession were men of worth and principle, though their views and opinions were narrow and illiberal, and though their conduct was often more under the influence of their bigotry than of their understandings. On this occasion, in their heated zeal for the exclusive interests of their party, they seem to have equally lost sight of sound policy and Christian moderation.*

But their efforts had no effect whatever, either to lessen Mr Whitefield's popularity,

* See Note M.

or to lower his character in the country. They had, indeed, the contrary effect ; connected, as they of necessity were, with the well known solicitude which they had at first discovered, to have confined his ministrations within the pale of their own sect.

He continued to officiate, as he had originally done in England, sometimes in the parish churches, and more frequently in the fields, in the most populous districts of Scotland ; from Edinburgh and Glasgow, to Perth, Dundee, and Aberdeen ; every where attended by immense multitudes of men ; on many occasions, producing effects on his hearers of every rank, age, and character, of which, though there have been similar, there are certainly not many more striking, or perhaps equal examples.

It may be easily conceived, that the public would not be agreed on a subject so new and singular, and which attracted so much general attention. The countenance which was given to Mr Whitefield, and the astonishing effects imputed to his labours, not only created much diversity of opinion within

the Established Church, but occasioned violent dissensions in private life, which many individuals still alive can attest, and of which a greater number must remember to have heard.

Dr Erskine was still a student at the University of Edinburgh, and was one of those who zealously defended the character of Mr Whitefield. He felt the force of his powerful and popular eloquence, and seems to have had a strong impression of the usefulness and efficacy of his evangelical doctrines.

Dr Robertson, then also a student at the University, as well as many of the most respectable men in the country, certainly entertained a different opinion, both of his character, which they did not at that time consider as sufficiently established, and of the extraordinary effects imputed to his public ministrations.

Every surmise to the prejudice of his personal character, was completely removed in the course of his life. But it is not surprising, that, while he was yet a youth,

and while his private history was but imperfectly known, many doubts should have been connected, in the minds of very impartial men, with the peculiar circumstances which distinguished him as an itinerant preacher. The fact is, that they who questioned, and they who defended his character, were, at this time, equally confident and equally keen in maintaining their opposite opinions.

Among other facts, the following anecdote has sometimes been mentioned.

Dr Robertson and Dr Erskine had been associated in a literary society, in the University, with a number of individuals who became afterwards considerable in different departments. Unfortunately, the question relating to Mr Whitefield's character and usefulness was introduced into their debates; and, creating very contrary opinions, was agitated with so much zeal and asperity, that it occasioned the dissolution of their society, and is said to have, for some time, interrupted even their intercourse in private life.

This anecdote shews, that the interest taken in the subject was far from being confined to the vulgar, and that, even in the Universities, it was not contemplated with indifference.

The clamour excited in England before this time, against the progress of Methodism, in which the characters of its different founders were treated with equal freedom and severity, must have greatly contributed to heighten the prejudices circulated in Scotland against Mr Whitefield's celebrity, and against every degree of respectability or success ascribed to his labours.

There was not, indeed, the same prejudice in Scotland as in England against field-preaching. During the preceding century, the persecuted Presbyterians, driven from their churches, had transmitted to their descendants a partiality for religious assemblies in the fields, which, although no longer the effect of necessity, continued to be in very general practice, as often as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed, and in some districts of the coun-

try, are not even at this day completely disused.

When Mr Whitefield, therefore, appeared in the Orphan-Hospital Park at Edinburgh, the circumstance of his addressing the people in the open air exhibited no novelty to an audience, who were far too numerous to have been contained in any church of the city, and who were accustomed to field-preaching in almost every parish of the country in which they occasionally resided.

Nor did the malignant whispers or invectives to the prejudice of his character, though they were circulated with equal industry and keenness, bear down the effects of his commanding eloquence, of which every individual in his audience appears to have felt an almost irresistible impression.* They gave him credit for the purity of his motives, amidst all the calumnies which were spread against him. And it can now be affirmed, without reserve, that whatever

* See Note N.

opinion may be held with regard to his conceptions of Christian doctrine; or the form in which he attempted the work of an Evangelist, he lived to contradict every surmise to the prejudice of his intentions, and went down to the grave at last, with a character of unblemished and established integrity.

In the allusion made to this subject in Warburton's letter,* it does not appear whether he had before mentioned it to Dr Erskine, or whether the latter, without any previous communication, had entered into a defence of the followers of Mr Whitefield, against the charge of methodism and enthusiasm. Though the allusion is expressed in very general terms, there can be no doubt, from its date, that this was the subject referred to.

Warburton had not, at this time, considered the question relating to methodism with the attention which he afterwards bestowed on it. He was not disposed to dis-

* Page 55.

trust Dr Erskine's representation; but it is clear, from the lines which he quoted to him from Pope, that he was not even then without his jealousy of methodistical enthusiasm. And from what he wrote, eighteen or twenty years afterwards, in his "Discourse on the Operations of the Holy Spirit," it is certain that, if he had entered seriously into the subject, he would have been far from adopting the ideas of his correspondent.

When Dr Erskine wrote Dr Warburton, he believed, and he held the same opinion till his death, that Mr Whitefield had done very considerable service to the interests of religion in Scotland, as well as in other countries to which his labours extended. He thought himself warranted to vindicate those who countenanced him from the charge of enthusiasm, so frequently applied to every appearance of unusual earnestness in the service of the gospel, and to every expression of zeal which goes beyond the dictates of fashionable example, or of clerical apathy.

He was aware that Whitefield belonged to the class of men who had assumed the name of Methodists at Oxford, and who were afterwards stigmatized in England by that designation. But he was not willing to admit that Whitefield's methodism was enthusiasm, or that they were enthusiasts who professed to be interested or edified by his labours.

It is not very probable that, even at this time, he gave complete satisfaction to Warburton, notwithstanding the civil expressions in the answer which he received. After the attention which the Methodists had already attracted in England, there is no reason to imagine, from Warburton's habits of thinking, that he would have been, in any circumstances, or in any degree, easily reconciled to the idea of itinerant preaching.

On the other hand, in Scotland, though the opponents of Mr Whitefield were neither few nor inconsiderable, and were countenanced by some of the most enlightened men in the country; though his original associates

in the secession continued to preach and to write against him ; he possessed so much respect and favour from men of very different ranks and characters, that even they whose opinions were most decidedly against him did not venture to have recourse to any strong measure, to check his growing influence among the people.

Though he originally travelled into more distant counties, and when his excursions in Scotland became more limited at a later period, seems to have preached more frequently at Edinburgh than in any other quarter, in 1742 his labours were most conspicuous in the West of Scotland, and especially in the parishes of Cambuslang and Kilsyth. He had not before visited either of these parishes, though some individuals from them might have been his hearers in 1741, at Glasgow, or in its immediate vicinity, where he appears to have then attracted great attention.

In the following winter, (1741-2,) very remarkable impressions of religion were observed in the congregation of Cambus-

lang, under the ministry of Mr M'Culloch, the pastor of that parish—a man of genuine piety and of considerable capacity, but who is said to have had nothing particularly striking either in the manner or substance of his preaching. His hearers, in considerable numbers, were on different occasions so violently agitated, while he preached on the Christian doctrine of regeneration, as to fall down, in the midst of the multitude, under visible paroxysms of bodily agony.

To suit his labours to what he considered as important circumstances in the state of his parishioners, he thought himself bound in duty to add to the number of their religious exercises. He preached frequently on week-days as well as on Sundays. He met with them often separately and together in his own house, to instruct, to admonish, and to console them, according to the best idea which he could form of their state of mind. The effect of his labours became every day more visible and extensive; and even they who were most disposed to ques-

tion the soundness of his judgment on the subject, could scarcely refuse to give him credit for the purity of his intentions. The same visible agitation among the people was continued during the whole course of the winter, and his labours and solicitudes were never relaxed.

It is not surprising that events so unusual, and which seemed to go so far beyond the natural effect of the means employed in producing them, should have arrested the attention of the public ; or that multitudes should have flocked to Cambuslang to ascertain or to witness them.

Similar effects began to appear at Kilsyth, in the Barony parish of Glasgow, and in some other adjacent parishes ; and something less remarkable, but of the same kind, had been before observed at Edinburgh and other districts of Scotland, where Mr Whitefield had preached. But nothing can be more certain, than that the unusual events at Cambuslang had been a subject of general observation and inquiry, for many months before Mr Whitefield had ever

been there; and it is not possible to identify their commencement with his labours, by any fair examination of the facts as they occurred.

Mr Whitefield was undoubtedly no stranger to similar agitations in large congregations, either in England or America; and perhaps imputed more to them than men of a less sanguine temper would have readily admitted. But there can be no doubt, that, to whatever cause they were ascribed, the effects of Mr M'Culloch's solitary labours had been so considerable as to gain the attention of the public, and to attract multitudes to witness them, long before Mr Whitefield had any opportunity of joining him.

It was natural, however, to suppose that, after what he had heard, Mr Whitefield would seize on the first occasion which offered to visit Mr M'Culloch. In the summer of 1742 he was more at Cambuslang, and in its immediate vicinity, than in any other district. He was there joined by a considerable number of ministers of the

Established Church; by some whose curiosity was excited to examine the appearances which had attracted so much attention; and by others who were already convinced that they were not common events, and were willing to give their help in what they believed to be the work of God.

From this time the multitudes who assembled were more numerous than they had ever been, or perhaps than any congregation which had ever before been collected in Scotland; the religious impressions made on the people were apparently much greater, and more general; and the visible convulsive agitations which accompanied them exceeded every thing of the kind which had yet been observed.

Whatever opinion we may form either of the nature or of the source of those extraordinary effects, it is at least a most remarkable fact, that, in this period, they were neither confined to any one district or country, nor were exclusively connected with the ministry of any individuals.

In Scotland, though they were more frequent and more remarkable in the crowds collected by Mr Whitefield, than in any other congregations, they were observed, nearly at the same time, in situations remote from Cambuslang, under the stated ministrations of the parish ministers.

Both before this time and afterwards, there were similar facts related among the Methodists of England ; which, though they were magnified in Mr Wesley's Journals into not merely supernatural, but miraculous events, can scarcely be questioned as facts which in substance occurred, how far soever we must believe them to have been removed from miraculous interposition.

In America, also, and especially in New England, there were many accounts of the same kind, from situations in which English methodism was entirely unknown. There was, in particular, an account of remarkable conversions, attended by the same symptoms of bodily agitation, published by Jonathan Edwards, (no mean man sure-

ly,) from his congregation of Northampton in Massachusetts, in 1734, before either Wesley or Whitefield were heard of.

Is it to be supposed, on the one hand, that the accounts transmitted to us on this subject were unfounded or exaggerated, and that the visible impressions related, had either no existence in fact, or were not entitled to be connected, in any degree, with the progress or efficacy of genuine religion? Or, on the other hand, are convulsions or agitations of body to be set down as proofs of the efficacy of preaching, as the effects or indications of real conversions, or of any supernatural influence accompanying religious impressions?

It is necessary to avoid both these extremes, to form any sound or dispassionate opinion on this subject.

The facts themselves, as they occurred in Scotland, whatever view may be taken of them, are ascertained by the most unquestionable evidence,—by the testimony of Mr John Maclaurin of Glasgow, who was most assiduous and minute in his investiga-

tion of them, *—by Dr John Hamilton of the High Church of Glasgow, whose good sense and discernment were worthy of the high respectability of his character, †—by Mr Robe of Kilsyth, whose integrity was never questioned, and who published a narrative on the subject, ‡—by Dr Webster of Edinburgh, who accompanied Mr Whitefield, and preached with him at Cambuslang; who published a defence of what he represented as real conversions there, in opposition to those who pronounced them a delusion; who wrote from his personal knowledge, and attested the facts of which he was an eye-witness, §—and by Dr Erskine himself, who was then a student in divinity; who wrote a pamphlet on the subject, entitled “The Signs of the “Times,” which has furnished one of the

* Account of his Life prefixed to his Sermons and Essays.

† In his letter to Mr Prince of Boston in 1742, published in the Life of Whitefield.

‡ Robe's Narrative.

§ Webster's “Divine Influence, the true Spring of the Extraordinary Work at Cambuslang;” and his second edition of ditto, with a preface, in answer to Mr Fisher's Review.

chief reasons for introducing the subject into this narrative. *

The facts related from New England are, in like manner, attested by Mr Prince, Dr Colman, Mr Foxcroft, Mr Morehead of Boston ; by Jonathan Edwards, President of the College of New Jersey ; and by many others equally respectable. †

Setting the narratives of Whitefield and Wesley entirely out of the question, no events can be more satisfactorily attested as unquestionable facts. Though we do not adopt the conclusions or opinions which any of the persons mentioned has connected with the facts, we cannot question the facts themselves, of which they were eye-witnesses, and which they have deliberately attested to the public. From what we know of their individual characters, we can neither think it credible that all of them could be imposed on, nor that any

* Signs of the Times.

† Prince's Christian History ;— Letters of Messrs Foxcroft, Morehead, Prince, &c. of Boston ;—Gillies's Life of Whitefield.

one of them was capable of deliberately imposing on the world.

But, allowing the facts to be ascertained, it is not as easy to determine the fair conclusion which ought to be deduced from them. We are not surely to believe, as Wesley more than insinuates with regard to similar effects attending his own ministrations, that bodily agitations or convulsions, or any sudden release from them, connected with any supposed impressions of religion, are to be regarded as indications of miraculous interposition, or even as certain proofs or signals of the effectual application of religious truth to the consciences of those who experience them. A reasonable and dispassionate man will not hastily adopt this conclusion; nor will it be easy to persuade him, that, in the most favourable view of them, the observations made at Cambuslang either did or could indicate more, than the deep concern and interest which the individuals so sensibly affected took at the time, in doctrines which seemed to have

come home to their consciences, and to have irresistibly awakened their alarms.

A strong view of his own character, and of the irreparable consequences of an irreligious life, clearly stated and deeply impressed on the conscience, may be conceived in very different circumstances, to produce the same effects on any individual who attracts no public notice, and of whom nothing more is known, than that from that time he exhibits in private life a different character from that which before belonged to him. The mental or bodily agitations occasioned by his first alarms, from the apprehended effects of his unprincipled conduct, may not have been essentially different from those which occurred at Cambuslang, though his circumstances have not subjected him to the inquiries or observations of others. He may feel as much agitation as the converts of that time, though the situation, in which he has received his convictions, has confined the cause of them to his own bosom, or to the confidence of his intimate associates. It is equally certain

that the same feelings may exist, and may even be experienced in the same degree, when they are accompanied by no such agitation of body, and by nothing but their moral effect to render them visible to the eye of the world.

It ought to be observed, at the same time, that such external effects on the body as were observed at Cambuslang, may be produced in very different circumstances, by powerful interests, or sudden alarms of any other kind, in which religion has no concern. When the cause of them is clearly seen, it will not be denied that they prove to the conviction of a spectator, that the impressions made on the individual at the time is both serious and deep.

It is not necessary to suppose that more than this was proved by the striking appearances among the converts at Cambuslang; if we except the conclusions deducible from the moral effects which are said to have followed them. The impressions made on the individuals were strong and visible at the moment. But they might, or

they might not, have been lasting, as deep concern on any other subject may be long retained or soon surmounted. It is well known, that much visible agitation may be produced by the impressions made on the conscience, which terminate neither in effectual repentance nor in serious religion. But it is equally true, on the other hand, that the same external appearances may, in other instances, be followed by effects on the habits and conduct of the individuals, which are clearly seen by those who know them, and which last to the end of their lives.

The converts of Cambuslang and Kilsyth could not prove their sincerity by their agitation ; but it is equally clear, that their agitation could furnish no reasonable ground to suspect them of insincerity.

It may, no doubt, be admitted, in perfect consistency with all this representation, that physical sympathy in a crowd might, sometimes, produce bodily convulsions, which had no connection with any religious feeling. And this fact, as well as other circum-

stances alluded to, will account for such examples as occurred of pretended converts of that time, who afterwards contradicted their professions.

But it must not be forgotten, that the number was very considerable of those who dated their first and best impressions of religion from this time, and who were afterwards distinguished by a visible and unquestionable reformation of manners, of which few examples of the same extent can be produced in modern times. Even some of those who have done their utmost to decry the converts of Cambuslang, and to diminish their number, are obliged to admit, that they might amount to *some hundreds*; and others, who appear to have honestly related the facts from their own observations and inquiries, and to have rejected every circumstance from their narratives, of which they did not think themselves fully assured, mention four hundred at Cambuslang, independent of those who belonged to Kilsyth.

Whatever opinion may be held with re-

gard to the means or influence, with which four hundred individuals connected a reformation in their moral and religious characters, which they afterwards supported through life; no fair man will deny, that such an effect produced on such a number of human beings, is a subject neither of ridicule nor contempt. Many thousands attended, on whom no visible impression seems to have been made. And this fact, according with ordinary experience, and honestly related in the narratives on the subject, confirms instead of lessening their credibility.

On the other hand, let the thousands who go away without having received any visible impression be out of the question, (though many good effects might have been produced, which were neither observed nor related at the time,) four hundred individuals, who, to the conviction of those who knew them become better men,—men more useful and conscientious in their stations, and more faithful in their practical duties, than they ever were before, and who pre-

serve this character while they live; exhibits a view of the religion of Cambuslang and Kilsyth, which a wise man will not easily bring himself to reprobate; and which no good man, if he candidly examines the facts, and believes them, will allow himself to despise.

It is in vain to represent the religious instruction of Cambuslang, as so defective either in form or in substance, as to be incapable of producing any salutary effect; and as having been addressed much more to the imaginations and the passions, than to the consciences or the understandings of the people.

Though this is not admitted to have been the fact, by those who had best access to judge, if it be true that what was there preached became the instrument of producing a permanent reformation of manners in four or five hundred individuals, within the short space of six or eight months, no other testimony is requisite to demonstrate either its value or its efficiency.

The examples published to establish this fact, it is impossible to mention here with any minuteness. It was observed, in particular, at Kilsyth, that before this period, the people of that parish had been remarkable for such a litigious spirit, as had in a great measure destroyed the comfort and confidence of private life ; and that, immediately after this period, the spirit of litigation seemed to be so much extinguished by the spirit of religion, that the magistrate of the district declared, that for many months no action whatever had been brought before his court, where it had before been usual to have a great many during the course of every week.

Similar facts, equally decisive, were related from other districts. And, in general, it was certainly believed by those who had the best access to be thoroughly informed, and who lived many years in the habits of intimate communication with the individuals, that they who were called the Converts of 1742, with few exceptions indeed, supported through life the character which

they then assumed, and were equally distinguished by purity of manners and Christian sincerity.

It is more than probable that they are now all in their graves, with Mr Whitefield himself, and every individual who attempted to stigmatize or to defend him. And it is surely consolatory to know, that, according to the best information which has been preserved, they have left no stain on their religious profession, or on the strong impressions of religion, which, under God, they ascribed to the ministry of Mr Whitefield and his associates; that their conduct was equally open to those who distrusted their original professions, and to those who relied on them; and that, at the distance of upwards of seventy years, every information with regard to their personal conduct, is in favour of the powerful impressions, by means of which they believed themselves to have been first persuaded to become Christians in earnest, and to have first imbibed the spirit of practical religion.*

* See Note O.

When Dr Erskine published his pamphlet, entitled "The Signs of the Times," he had it less in view to enter into a formal defence of the events at Cambuslang, than to point out what he conceived to be their tendency, and to illustrate certain conclusions which he thought might be fairly deduced from them. He rather referred to the productions of Dr Webster and Mr Robe, than attempted to add any thing to their representation of the facts.

But he incidentally appreciates the leading facts, in the same way in which they have now been stated. The bodily agitations or convulsions he considers as nothing more than the natural effects of deep impressions made on the conscience,—such as any serious alarm on any subject in common life, remote from religion, might, in similar circumstances, have occasioned. He expresses great confidence in the sincerity of Mr Whitefield, and sanguine expectations from the immediate and remote effects of his animated labours. And in the conclusion, he endeavours to refute the ob-

jections which had been made to his view of the subject, by those who were neither friendly to Mr Whitefield, nor to any success which could be connected with his ministrations.

The pamphlet, to which his name is not prefixed, is, in general, written in his peculiar manner. It has not, perhaps, as much discrimination or novelty of illustration, as will be found in his first pamphlet, or in some of his later publications. But it possesses no inconsiderable proportion of his usual acuteness; and the argument maintained in it has all the advantage which it could derive from the earnestness, sincerity, and fairness with which it is conducted.

There may certainly be a doubt, whether he did not, on one point, carry his ideas farther than the subject required, or the circumstances warranted, when he supposed, that, in the singular facts which had occasioned his publication, some indications of the predicted glory of the latter days might be found, which might, perhaps, be intended as a signal held out

by Providence that this eventful period was approaching.

It is evident that he had this idea in his mind when this pamphlet was written ; though he mentions it with caution, and is sufficiently guarded in his application of the texts of Scripture which he supposes capable of an application to the subject.

If his reasoning on this point went beyond either the facts or the Scriptures on which he depended, it should be recollected, that he had then all the sanguine views of a young man of twenty-one, on every subject in which he took a keen or a personal interest ; and that he was by no means singular in the conclusions which he adopted.

Jonathan Edwards, a man much farther advanced in life, who was equally distinguished as a profound divine, and an acute philosopher, had, seven years before this time, published the same general views of the subject, occasioned by similar events which had occurred at Northampton ; and

he had many coadjutors both in Scotland and America. *

From all the information received from those who had the best opportunity of ascertaining the facts, there seems to be no sound reason to doubt, that the events in question were, under the direction of Providence, of very considerable influence in promoting the interests of practical religion at the time ; that, with few exceptions, their effects were, in general, both uniform and permanent ; and that, in these points, as far as we have the means of judging, they were estimated fairly by Dr Erskine, and by those who maintained the same argument with him.

It is as clear, that the publications of that time, on the other side, are equally reprehensible for the spirit in which they are written, and the false argument assumed in them. But it ought not to be forgotten, that this should be imputed, rather to the heats which entered into the controversy, than to the personal characters of the writers,

* See Note P.

who were, in general, worthy and conscientious men ; though, as others have done, they sometimes set down their own prejudices for principles, and mistake the narrow spirit of party for the fervour of Christian zeal.

When Mr Whitefield came first to Scotland in 1741 and 1742, he was employed by several ministers of the establishment. The same practice was continued for several years afterwards ; and, as far as appears, no notice had been taken of his admission to the parish churches, by any of the Ecclesiastical Courts, till the year 1748.

Though many of the clergy, who differed on other points, were agreed in expressing their dissatisfaction with the countenance given to Mr Whitefield, there were several circumstances which had hitherto prevented them from uniting in any public measure to restrain it.

The proceedings of the ministers in the secession against him had been so very intemperate, that the keenest members of the

establishment might have naturally felt a reluctance to join issue with them.

The great body of the people were so extremely attached to him, that a direct attack on those who supported him could scarcely have been made, without incurring a very considerable degree of public odium.

Some of the most distinguished families in the kingdom were, as often as the opportunity was given them, his constant hearers; and were, besides, in the habit of admitting him to their private society; and among these, in particular, was a nobleman, who was then his Majesty's representative, as Lord High Commissioner, in the General Assembly, who not only attended his ministrations, and invited him to his house, but who introduced him to his public table, during the session of an Assembly.

When these circumstances are added to the long established practice of the Presbyterian church, with regard to an occasional ministerial communion with foreign churches, it is not surprising, that the ministers of the establishment were not forward

to agitate a question on which unanimity was not to be expected, and in which principle and prudence were both involved.

At last, however, the subject was introduced into the synod of Glasgow in 1748, by Mr Millar, minister of Hamilton, the father of the celebrated Professor of Law in the University of Glasgow,—a man of high respectability as a clergyman, equally distinguished by the strength of his understanding, and by his talents in his profession.

It cannot fail to be remarked, that, when this question was at last taken up, the circumstances attending Mr Whitefield's labours were by no means so remarkable as they had been some years before. He was no longer officiating at Cambuslang; and the singular appearances exhibited there were no longer mentioned.

His visits to Scotland were indeed continued, and particularly his visits to Edinburgh and Glasgow, where he was uniformly attended, as he had always been, by immense multitudes from every class of the inhabitants. But the crowds who fol-

lowed him, cannot be conceived to have given more offence in 1748, than in any of the preceding years.

There is a circumstance related, which probably explains the zeal which was excited on this occasion, though it was not brought forward as the ostensible reason for the proposition submitted to the synod of Glasgow by Mr Millar. Mr Whitefield had just before been employed to preach for Dr Gillies in the College Church of Glasgow, and for Dr Erskine in the church of Kirkintilloch; and this circumstance seems to have given great offence to some of the clergy, and particularly to Mr Millar.

At the same time, the motion made by Mr Millar, though it was both keenly opposed and supported, would, in later times, have been thought rather temperate than violent. It went no farther than to propose, "That the synod should declare it as
" their judgment, that no minister within
" their bounds should employ itinerant
" preachers or ministers, with whose cha-
" racter they were not sufficiently acquaint-

“ed, or who might be of a doubtful character, and that presbyteries should be attentive to this.”

It had at first been expressed in more peremptory terms. But after it was modified into this form, it cannot be denied to have been sufficiently temperate with regard to the object which they who supported it professed to have in view; and it is probable that, from the spirit of the country at this time, a stronger measure could not have been attempted with any probability of success.

As applied to Mr Whitefield, who was publicly named, the chief objection to it is involved in the supposition which it directly conveys, that he was a man of an unknown or of a doubtful character; for the enactment which it contains is too indefinite to have called forth much opposition.

It appeared, however, to the majority of the synod, of which forty members were present, that, even in its modified form, besides its indirect reflections on Mr Whitefield's character, it might have had a consequence which they were not willing to con-

cede. It might, in their apprehension, have had the effect to lay an unreasonable restraint on occasional ministerial communion with other Protestant churches, which, down to that period, had, at all times, been in practice among the Presbyterians of Scotland.

Several members of the synod, who were no friends to Mr Whitefield, but who, on the contrary, avowed that they had formed a contemptible opinion of him, resisted Mr Millar's motion on this ground alone; and it was ultimately proposed, that the judgment of the synod should be expressed in the following terms: "That no minister within their bounds should employ ministers or preachers, not licensed or ordained in Scotland, till he had had sufficient evidence of their license and good character, and should be in readiness to give an account of his conduct to his own presbytery, when required."

This proposition, which appears to have united different opinions, seems to have been perfectly agreeable to the friends of

Mr Whitefield ; and it was adopted in the synod by the votes of 27 against 13.

Dr Erskine, then minister of Kirkintilloch, and, as has been already mentioned, one of the ministers who had been complained of, as having employed Mr Whitefield, took an active part in the debate ; and, soon after, published an account of it, in which he is admitted to have given a fair representation of the arguments on both sides.

This pamphlet is well and forcibly written. Mr Millar's argument did not probably, in his hands, lose any part of its strength ; and the speech given on the opposite side appears to have been pronounced by himself, and possesses the qualities both of candour and argument, by which all his speeches were distinguished.*

The substance of the debate is no longer interesting. But there is one circumstance belonging to it, which, at this distance of time, must excite our astonishment. Though, by those who supported the original motion,

* See Note Q.

great freedom was used with the character of Mr Whitefield, and many acts of folly and imprudence were imputed to him; and though the avowed object of the motion was to prevent his access to the pulpits of Scotland, there was not the most remote allusion, in the course of the whole debate, either on the one side or the other, to the proceedings at Cambuslang, though that parish belongs to the synod of Glasgow, and is in the immediate vicinity of Mr Millar's residence. There was not the slightest reflection applied to those who assisted or employed him *there*, or at Kilsyth, though Dr Erskine and Dr Gillies, who had given him their pulpits, were so directly referred to, that they thought it necessary to defend themselves. There was not a syllable pronounced on either side with regard to the remarkable events which had so much, and so lately, engrossed the public attention, and in which so many members of the synod itself were so deeply concerned; though the danger, or the expediency, of employing Mr Whitefield, was the only subject at issue.

It is not possible to account for this fact, but by supposing, that the members who, on this occasion, held opposite opinions, considered the point, which they seem tacitly to have agreed to avoid, as too delicate for a public debate, and that they were unwilling to irritate one another, or to agitate the public mind by introducing it. The advocates for the motion did not go beyond the precise point they had in view ; to prevent Mr Whitefield from being afterwards employed in the churches ; and for this they contended from other considerations than the transactions at Cambuslang. They who opposed it, though they defended him, restricted their argument to the same topics to which their opponents confined themselves. It seems to have been a matter of prudence on both sides, and shews at least the self-command and good temper with which this debate must have been conducted.

The only question of general interest which occurred, related to the expediency of maintaining occasional ministerial communion with foreign Protestant churches ;

and a few remarks on this subject shall conclude this chapter, in which this part of the narrative has perhaps already occupied more room than was due to it.

The idea of ministerial communion with foreign Protestants, supposing the individuals employed to adopt for the time the mode of worship in practice, appears at first sight to be neither unreasonable in itself, nor to be liable to much abuse.

After the Reformation, it was in almost universal practice among Protestant churches, and in England and Scotland as much as in any other country. One of the first controversies about *Christian communion* was created by the English exiles at Frankfort, in Queen Mary's time, who attempted to exclude from their communion all who were unwilling to adopt the English service-book, as it stood before Queen Mary's accession. The service-book, which they made a term of communion, had been altered and new-modelled, so recently as the time of Edward the Sixth, and, in the form in which it was then in use, they had neither antiquity nor authority to plead for it. But

unreasonable and presumptuous as they were, even at Frankfort no objection was made to the occasional employment of any Protestant minister, who was willing for the time to conform to the mode of worship which they preferred.

In England itself, though the arbitrary mandates of Elizabeth interdicted at intervals almost all regular preaching, and were more frequently employed to silence the preachers of her own communion, than to exclude any foreign assistance, neither the foreign Protestant ministers, nor even the Independents and Presbyterians at home, were ever completely shut out from the churches, till after the controversies created by the High Church doctrines of Laud; and especially till after the disputes relating to habits and ceremonies, (in every view insignificant, except as they involved the power of the church to make them terms of communion,) which, after his time, became inveterate and irreconcilable.

In Scotland, where, with the exception of a few Catholic, Episcopalian, and Cameronian dissenters, the whole inhabitants of the

country were united to the established church till the year 1740, when the first seceding ministers were ejected, the doctrine of occasional ministerial communion with other churches, when the persons employed were willing to conform to the established mode of worship, was in uniform and uninterrupted practice, down to a very late period in the last century. Ministers from England—churchmen and dissenters—and ministers from the provinces of North America, were indiscriminately admitted to ministerial communion, when they were occasionally in Scotland; and no very serious inconvenience was ever perceived to have arisen from the practice. It had, on the contrary, an obvious tendency to repress the illiberal and mischievous spirit, both of national and religious bigotry, more hurtful to the character of the Christian church, and to the genuine interests of practical religion, than any degree of laxity, with regard to ministerial communion, can ever become. *

* See Note R.

A new system has, however, been adopted by the ecclesiastical law in Scotland, which, though not universally approved of, has been carried into effect without much opposition. If there was an irregularity to be checked, it was at least not very important, from the few examples which had occurred. And, on the other hand, any supposed advantage which the former practice possessed, was so seldom to be expected, that there is no very serious reason for considering the new regulations as a subject either of much dissatisfaction or regret.

The most obvious effect of them, besides, has been, that the same individuals who, in their visits to Scotland under the former practice, had access to the parish churches, are now admitted to address the very same description of hearers, from the pulpits of Presbyterian or Episcopalian dissenters.

Whether the established church has gained any thing by this innovation, may be fairly questioned. But there can be no reason to doubt, that much she cannot lose.

CHAP. V.

Dr Erskine publishes detached Sermons, and an Essay on the more frequent Dispensation of the Lord's Supper.—Commencement of his Correspondence with America.—The remainder of Dr Warburton's Correspondence with him.

DR ERSKINE'S attention to the more private departments of pastoral duty was not, at any time, permitted to encroach on his regular preparation for the more public service of the Lord's day. At Kirkintilloch he had three discourses to prepare for every Sunday, and this of itself required a degree of industry, in which every man, even with equal talents, has not fortitude to persevere. The acuteness of his faculties, and his habits of study from his early youth, made his labour easy ; and enabled him, not only to do justice to his official duties, but to perform a great deal more, without allow-

ing one obligation to interfere with another.

His reading must, at this period of his life, have been considerable, in general literature as well as in theology. Though his common-place books, written in shorthand, are illegible, they contain enough in the common character to point out the subjects which had occupied him, and to shew the indefatigable industry and patience with which he had applied to them.

But he allowed nothing to divert his mind from the practical studies or duties of his profession. Besides his account of Mr Hall, and his narrative of the debate in the synod of Glasgow, he published nothing during his residence at Kirkintilloch, excepting three sermons, preached at Glasgow in 1745; an essay, intended to promote the more frequent dispensation of the Lord's Supper, in 1749; and a sermon, preached before the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, in 1750; all of which have been republished in his printed discourses, or theological dissertations.

The three sermons of 1745 had been preached for Mr Maclaurin, in the North West Church of Glasgow; and had been then so far misunderstood by some of his hearers, as to have been afterwards represented as containing an intentional attack on certain individuals.

To repel these unfounded surmises, equally injurious to his character, and repugnant to his temper, as soon as they reached him, he published the sermons; and prefixed to them an advertisement in the following terms, highly characteristical of the spirit and integrity of the author: “The following discourses have been represented in so disadvantageous a light, that I find myself obliged, in my own vindication, to publish them. I am indeed sensible, that several things in them might have been expressed in a way more clear, and less liable to exception; and that they might easily have been put into a dress fitter for public view. But, that the reader may judge how unfair the censures are which some have thrown out

“ against them, I have neither made any
“ alterations in my papers myself, nor com-
“ municated them to any of my friends ;
“ but have ventured the discourses abroad
“ precisely as they were delivered. What-
“ ever some have taken the liberty to
“ insinuate, I am free to declare, that I
“ had no other view in preaching them,
“ than to guard my hearers against the
“ delusions of the mere moralist on the
“ one hand, and the enthusiast and the
“ Antinomian on the other. Nor were my
“ cautions on either of these heads meant
“ as reflections against the characters of any
“ particular persons whatsoever. I never
“ yet esteemed the pulpit a fit place for
“ slander and defamation, and, I hope, shall
“ never be left to prostitute it to so base a
“ purpose.”

There is a remarkable paragraph added in this advertisement, in which the author acknowledges that, in those sermons, he had been considerably indebted to Jonathan Edwards's sermons, published in 1738, and to a manuscript “*Essay on Prejudices against the*

“Gospel,” by a minister of the church, written, as is now known, by Mr John Maclaurin, and published since his death. Nothing but the fairness of a mind as open as day, could have led him to think it necessary to mention this circumstance. Mr Edwards’s sermons, and Mr Maclaurin’s essay, deserve the character which he has subjoined ; and the argument of the last, in particular, is equally rational and profound. At the same time, Dr Erskine’s three sermons are very little, if at all, indebted to either of them. But he was conscious, while he was writing, that he had their train of thought in his mind, and could not withhold his acknowledgment of this circumstance, though none of his readers will find it easy to trace it, even after it has been mentioned.

This fact exhibits a singular view of the scrupulous candour which he carried into every part of his personal conduct, and which was not more remarkable in the beginning, than in the latter part of his life.

The three sermons, which were afterwards

republished in the first volume of his discourses, certainly gave no just ground for the aspersions which gave rise to their original publication. They contain much good sense, and sound practical theology; though it may certainly be doubted, whether the author has, in every part of them, given the original meaning of the text. They are perhaps scarcely equal, in composition or variety of illustration, to the greater part of his printed discourses. A friend who entertained this opinion, suggested to him, that they were inferior to the rest of his sermons, and might have been withheld from the last edition of his first volume. But this hint he resisted with great keenness, not because he questioned his friend's opinion with regard to the comparative merit of the sermons, but because, had he yielded to it, it might have been supposed, that he had at last become sensible of the justice of the remarks, to which they owed their first publication. The fairness of his mind disdained every idea which malignity itself could have connected with a

dishonourable feeling; and his literary reputation he regarded as a very secondary object.

The essay by which he intended to promote the more frequent dispensation of the Lord's Supper, was connected with an overture, which had probably originated with himself, circulated through the church by the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, and transmitted to the Assembly; proposing that this ordinance should be dispensed in every parish at least four times in every year, and in all the parishes of the same presbytery on the same day; and that there should be only a single sermon preached on a week day preceding the communion Sabbath, in place of the multiplicity of sermons which had till that time been in use.

There were certainly strong reasons for the proposal which was the object of this essay, as well as for many of the alterations which were suggested to render it practicable.

The subject had been under the consideration of the presbytery of Edinburgh in

1720, who, without going as far as the overture from the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, had abridged the number of sermons,* and made an arrangement by which the Lord's Supper was to be dispensed in one or more of the congregations within the bounds of the presbytery, in every month of the year. But no change had hitherto been

* Before this time, the practice since the Revolution had uniformly been, that three sermons should be preached on a fast-day, in the middle of the week preceding the Sunday appointed for the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, two on the Saturday, one in the morning and another in the evening of the Sunday, and two on the Monday. In some congregations in Scotland, the same practice is still continued, though the Lord's Supper is more frequently dispensed.

The people are attached to this multiplicity of sermons from the usage of their ancestors, who introduced it in more difficult times, and have transmitted it to their descendants, with other memorials of their piety and zeal under the hardships which they suffered,—hardships which they endured with a magnanimity of principle, which the frequency of their religious exercises had no small influence in sustaining; and which, if their posterity are worthy of their origin, neither malignity nor wit can ever render contemptible in their eyes.

But the same expedients are not necessary in times of general quiet and security. The presbytery of Edinburgh might have safely gone farther than they did go, in abridging the number of sermons; and though they might have had to combat the prejudices, they would have certainly added greatly to the comfort of the people.

made in other districts of Scotland, where, because the inconvenience attending the common practice was obviously greater, there was more occasion for reformation.

Dr Erskine discussed this subject with singular ability and learning, and his essay is, in point of execution, equal to any one of his other publications. He states, from the original authorities, the doctrine and practice of the early ages of the church; the decisions of Councils, and the opinions of the Fathers on the subject, with the practice of the reformers and of the reformed churches down to the latest period, as far as he had been able to procure them. He then represents the practice introduced into Scotland, immediately after the Reformation, and the circumstances in the times of persecution, from which a different mode was adopted. He points out the inconvenience attending the multiplicity of sermons which had been first brought into practice, when the Lord's Supper was dispensed under the rod of persecution; and which was still conti-

nued when the circumstances were no more the same; and he shews how unnecessary and inexpedient the same number of sermons becomes in different times; placing, in a very striking and forcible light, the arguments which then pressed on his own mind in support of the synodical overture.

He had an able and respectable coadjutor who published on the same subject, the Reverend Mr Thomas Randall, then minister of Inchtute, and afterwards of Stirling,—a man whose learning, ingenuity, and eminence as a Christian pastor, entitled him to the first distinctions in the church to which he belonged, as much as the variety of his conversation, and the cheerfulness of his private intercourse, have secured to him the affectionate and perpetual remembrance of his friends. No individual could have had a better claim to be heard on a subject so important to the edification of the people, and which he was, in every respect, so competent to discuss.

From very different topics he maintained the same argument with Dr Erskine; equal-

ly zealous in promoting the object ; and detailing, with more minuteness, the inconvenience of the practice which prevailed, and some pernicious effects ascribed to it on what was then the condition of the country.

Mr Randall's pamphlet (probably in manuscript) had reached Dr Erskine, after he had written, but before he had circulated his own publication. With the unassuming modesty which was natural to him, and which is more or less to be found in almost every transaction of his life, he thought it necessary, after he had read it, to subjoin to what he had printed the following note :
" Though Mr Randall handles the argument in a different method from me, and
" there are very few particulars in which
" we coincide, yet I think myself bound to
" acquaint the public, that they would not
" have been troubled with this hasty essay,
" if I had seen Mr Randall's papers before
" composing it," &c. &c. So humble and unpretending was the mind of Dr Erskine, even on a subject which he had thoroughly

examined, and on which he admits that his argument had not been anticipated! So much had he imbibed the spirit of the evangelical rule which enjoins "every man to esteem his neighbour better than himself."

The subject discussed in these pamphlets was certainly of very serious importance. A more frequent dispensation of the Lord's Supper than was at this time usual in Scotland, was unquestionably an object which deserved all the zeal and attention which it excited. The overture from the synod of Glasgow went perhaps somewhat farther than the circumstances required, or than was suited to the general situation of parishes in Scotland. But the thing attempted was, notwithstanding, though not in its full extent, in a great degree attained. The argument in Dr Erskine's and Mr Randall's essays went a great way to lessen the evil of which they complained. The Lord's Supper has, from that time, been more frequently and more uniformly dispensed, and in no small proportion of the

parishes the number of sermons connected with it has been at least considerably abridged.

Dr Erskine seldom left any source of information neglected on a subject to which he seriously applied his thoughts. When he published his pamphlet, he had recourse to a correspondence with ministers on the Continent, for information with regard to the practice of foreign churches. But that this part of the narrative may not be unreasonably extended, nothing more than an extract from a single letter shall be quoted.

It is a letter from Mr David Thomson, then minister at Amsterdam, afterwards at Rotterdam, and, at a later period, minister of Gargunnock and St Ninian's in Scotland. It is dated at Amsterdam, March 7, 1749. After mentioning the inquiries he had made at Dr Erskine's request, he tells him, as the result of them, "That, through all the re-
"formed churches in the seven provinces,
"the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper
"was administered generally four times in

“ the year, and, in the city of Amsterdam,
“ six times ; that, in Switzerland, it was
“ dispensed at least four times in the year in
“ all the Protestant churches, and in some
“ oftener ; that this last information he had
“ from Professor Wetstein, who was him-
“ self a minister of Basil for several years,
“ and that in that famous city it was given
“ every Lord’s day ; that the professor had
“ favoured him with a curious manuscript
“ relating to this subject, bearing the title, ‘*De*
“ *ritibus Ecclesiæ et Academiæ Basilen-*
“ *sis* ;’ that, in the city of Amsterdam, the
“ Lutherans communicated every fortnight ;
“ and in Sweden and Denmark, in the
“ large cities, every Lord’s day ; in the
“ country places and villages, at least four
“ times in the year ; that, in most places
“ in Germany, in the cities, the Lord’s Sup-
“ per was dispensed by the Lutherans, who
“ are the most numerous, and by the reformed
“ also, every Lord’s day, or every fortnight ;
“ sometimes oftener ; even twice a-week ;
“ and generally, at least, four times in the
“ year ; that this information was receiv-

“ ed from Lutheran ministers at Amster-
“ dam, who had been ministers in Ger-
“ many themselves ; that the Anabaptists at
“ Amsterdam, who are of different persua-
“ sions among themselves, had this sacra-
“ ment at least four times in the year ; some
“ oftener ; and so the Remonstrants also ;
“ that there was an Armenian church at
“ Amsterdam, commonly called the Persian
“ church, because mostly made up of Per-
“ sians, who communicated every Lord’s
“ day, and who held themselves to be of
“ the ancient Greek church.”

It is added, “ That the times for dispens-
“ ing the Lord’s Supper were not laid down
“ in many churches, but left to the judg-
“ ment and discretion of the rulers of the
“ churches ; and that over all of them they
“ had but one preparation sermon, which
“ was generally on the Saturday, and no
“ sermon on the Monday.”

This letter contained very important facts
on the subject ; but it is more than proba-
ble, that it had not reached Dr Erskine at

the time when his dissertation was published.

The dissertation, in point of execution and research, is not inferior to any of the author's productions. But the information received from Mr Thomson is not mentioned; as, in all probability, it would have been, if he had been possessed of it before his pamphlet was printed.

The modern practice of the foreign churches appears to have been by no means uniform; nor does it seem probable, that there ever was an exact uniformity on the subject among the Christian churches, since the apostolic age. It is evident, however, that, in all the churches to which Mr Thomson's inquiries applied, the Lord's Supper was much more frequently administered than had then been usual in any district of Scotland. And it is equally obvious, that the multiplicity of sermons which had been continued since the times of persecution, created the chief obstruction to what Dr Erskine contended for.

The number of sermons might perhaps

be more abridged than they have yet been, without any material injury to practical religion; and the Lord's Supper might, with considerable advantage, be still more frequently dispensed than it is at present. But it is also possible, that, on this subject, a change in the habits of the people might be carried farther than either prudence or expediency would warrant; and, in the circumstances of the Scottish church, much farther than would be justified, either by experience or authority.

Notwithstanding the practice of the foreign churches, and its coincidence with Dr Erskine's original opinion, it appears more than probable, that if he had been to write on the same subject fifty years later, though he would have maintained the substance of the same doctrine, he would not have gone quite so far in suggesting remedies, as the overture from the synod of Glasgow did in 1748-49,

He republished his Essay, indeed, among his theological dissertations, without alteration, in 1764. But when it was edit-

ed again, without his knowledge, a short time before his death, there is some reason to believe, that he was not satisfied with that proceeding, and that he would not then have republished it himself, without many alterations.

His communication with the Continent, on this subject, was probably the commencement of his correspondence for procuring foreign books, of which he afterwards so often availed himself. Mr Thomson procured him a considerable number; and from this time he formed a connection with some Dutch booksellers, as well as with some men of letters in foreign universities, by whose means he was always enabled to preserve his acquaintance with the progress of foreign literature, and especially with the publications on the Continent, connected directly or remotely with theology.

Even at this early period of his life, his attention was far from being confined to one subject, or his communications to one class of correspondents. His habits led him to collect from every quarter whatever

he thought of importance, on subjects either of literature or religion.

Mr Anderson, Minister of St Andrew's, whose name has already appeared in the course of this narrative, had a correspondence with him, while he remained at Kirkintilloch, about the meaning of certain Hebrew words, which he had found some difficulty to ascertain; a circumstance which shews how minutely he continued to prosecute the private studies suited to his profession, amidst all the eagerness with which he entered into other subjects, or exerted his talents in other duties.

He had already an extensive correspondence with America, and especially with American ministers; which, as long as he lived, was continued with them or with their successors, with great apparent satisfaction on both sides.

From its commencement it turned chiefly on the state of religion and learning in North America, and on the circumstances which served to promote or retard the progress of either. It related sometimes to the

internal government of the colonies, and to the politics of the times; and frequently to the encroachments of the French, and the means employed to resist them. But no small part of it at all times related to the interchange of books, and especially of new publications, which he sent to his correspondents, or received from them.

It appears, indeed, that, to have the advantage of American books, and to furnish his friends beyond the Atlantic with whatever he could send them of the literature of Great Britain, and especially on the subjects on which his own studies were chiefly employed, was a primary object in all his correspondence with America. He evidently made it a serious concern at the time of his first introduction into the church; and they who were accustomed to converse with him know how much of his attention it occupied in some of the latest years, and even in some of the last hours, of his life.

His chief correspondents on the American Continent, while he remained at Kirkintilloch, were Mr Cooper, Dr Colman, Mr

Foxcroft, Mr Morehead, Messrs Prince, senior and junior, of Boston ; Mr Parsons of Newburgh in Massachusetts, (in whose house Mr Whitefield died in 1770 ;) Mr Roby of Lynn, Mr Davies and Mr Dickinson of New Jersey ; and Jonathan Edwards of Northampton—Some of them men, highly distinguished by their literature and capacity, and all of them deservedly high in the esteem of the public as men of worth and principle.

He survived them all ; and appears to have continued his correspondence with their descendants to a very late period ; in which he frequently discovers a degree of tenderness and interest, equally creditable to the memory of the dead and to the character of the living.

After what has happened in later times, it is not possible to avoid the remark, that those worthy and respectable individuals seem to have lost no opportunity of expressing their affectionate attachment to the mother country, and their warm and cordial solicitude for her civil and religious interests.

They uniformly wrote like men who identified their own interests with the prosperity of Great Britain, and who held no language on any points, but such as was worthy of the most loyal and enlightened British subjects.

This was, indeed, the general language of America for many years after this period. If she adopted a different mode of thinking five and twenty years later, candid men are now perhaps prepared to admit, that intemperance and mismanagement at home had an influence in producing the change, as well as the turbulence or disaffection of America.

Dr Erskine was probably introduced to a great part of his American correspondence, by means of Mr Maclaurin of Glasgow ; to whose care some of the earliest letters which he received from that quarter were addressed, and who appears to have long before corresponded with the same individuals. He was therefore well acquainted with their characters before his communication with them began ; and the effects

of a correspondence, in which the experience and assistance of Mr Maclaurin gave him this original advantage, furnish a striking example of the influence of our earliest habits and associations on our permanent views and opinions. His connections with America had a strong hold of his mind, which was not shaken by all the events which he afterwards witnessed. His solicitude for her prosperity, and especially for her progress in literature and religion, was always expressed with eagerness and affection. He suffered no opportunity to escape him by which he could in any form contribute to it. And when the great controversy arose, which terminated in her separation from Great Britain, he entered into the subject, as will be afterwards seen, with a degree of interest and earnestness, which shews how heavily the idea of such a separation pressed upon his mind. His long habits of intercourse and esteem with so many individuals, whose situations were deeply affected by the revolution, became a severe aggravation to his private feelings, of what

he considered as an irreparable public calamity.

His correspondence was of necessity interrupted by the war, but as soon as the peace of 1783 put it in his power, he returned to it with the same affection and confidence with which it had been carried on for so many years before.

Dr Erskine continued minister of Kirkintilloch till the year 1753. But before his translation is mentioned, this is not an improper place for introducing the remaining part of Dr Warburton's correspondence with him.

That there may be no occasion to return to it again, the four following letters shall be inserted together, though the two last belong, the one to a time posterior to his residence at Kirkintilloch, and the last to a much later period of his life.

The first is dated “ *Bedford Row, (London,) October 25, 1748.*

“ I had the honour of your obliging letter, in which you tell me, you had been
“ so kind to send me Mr Geddes's book,
“ which, on my coming to town last night,

“I found at my house. I have just run over
“a page or two, (which is all of that part
“which relates to me I shall ever look into,
“for I have done with controversy,) and I
“think your judgment of it is right. You
“will not be displeased to find it confirm-
“ed by the book which comes along with
“this for your kind acceptance. There you
“will see all that Mr Geddes and his friends
“had cavilled at, fully obviated long before
“the publication of his book. You will
“not be surprised at the vivacity of some
“parts of it, when you understand it is in
“answer to the Billingsgate abuse of two
“very worthless authors, but who are the
“heroes of your Glasgow divines.

“What you mention of my sermons has
“encouraged me in an intention of giving
“one volume in octavo to the public.

“But hark you, my dear friend, why is
“that pen so long unemployed, that over-
“threw, in so masterly a manner, a large
“bulky volume of a noted divine, with a
“sixpenny pamphlet? In truth, you wrong
“the public, and your own reputation.

“ But this is the time’s plague. The pu-
 “ pils of Hutcheson will write, and you will
 “ not Is this the way to redeem the igno-
 “ miny of the age from ignorance and infide-
 “ lity? I hope you will let me hear better
 “ things of you. But while you continue
 “ to love me, I shall have no reason to
 “ complain for any thing but for the pub-
 “ lic. Being, with great truth, Dear Sir,
 “ your most affectionate and faithful humble
 “ servant, W. WARBURTON.”

When Warburton supposed that *he was done with controversy*, he knew little of himself, or affected an indifference with regard to his opponents, which he did not feel. At the same moment when he expresses himself in this manner, he sends his correspondent one of his controversial pamphlets, which contained a sufficient portion of asperity, against writers whom, whatever their pretensions in other respects might be, because they are his antagonists, he allows himself to stigmatize as “ *worthless authors.*” Language of this kind is not unusual to Warburton. Amidst all his respectable qua-

lities, he could never read with patience any thing that was published to controvert his doctrines, and was always too apt to sharpen his literary hostilities with personal invectives.

The two writers referred to in this letter are evidently Dr Stebbing and Dr Sykes, who had attacked him, the one on his Interpretation of the Command given to sacrifice Isaac ; and the other, on his Account of the Ancient Legislators, of the Double Doctrine of the Philosophers, of the Theocracy of the Jews, and of Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology. Warburton's answers have indeed all *the vivacity* (a term by which he intended to express the severity of sarcasm) which he mentions to his correspondent. Whether they are always conclusive is not so clear. Though he tells his opponents also, that *he had done with controversy*, the public are sufficiently aware, that he found many opportunities afterwards of retracting this expression of his chagrin.

His next letter is dated at "*Prior Park, September 20, 1750.*—DEAR SIR, The favour

“ of your obliging letter of the 1st instant was
“ sent me from my house in London to this
“ place, where I now am. I am surprised
“ my book was so long in getting to your
“ hands, for it was sent to Mr Wilson for
“ you as soon as it was published.

“ You give me great pleasure in your
“ approbation of it, and would have given
“ me much more in acquainting me in what
“ forwardness the works are, which, in a pre-
“ ceding letter, you did me the honour to
“ speak of as designed for the press.

“ The sect of Hutchesonians, or Shaftes-
“ bureans, which you speak of, will shortly
“ have a much more formidable object of
“ their resentment, and much nearer to them.
“ A very ingenious gentleman of Carlisle is
“ printing in London *An Examination of Lord*
“ *Shaftesbury's Notions concerning the use of*
“ *Ridicule, the Principles of Morality, and the*
“ *Evidence of Revelation*, which I hope will
“ prove a very sufficient antidote to a book,
“ which hath more contributed to poison
“ men's religious principles, than all other
“ free-thinking books put together.

“ Your penetration has let you into a very
“ important truth, that, had Dr M. (Mid-
“ dleton) been a master of scripture learning,
“ perhaps he might considerably have recom-
“ mended his hypothesis, by comparing it
“ with what the scripture says, as to the nature,
“ design, and duration of miraculous gifts ;
“ a truth, that none of the people in this
“ controversy seem to have been apprised
“ of. This gives me fresh cause to wish
“ that you would prosecute your design of
“ giving us some tracts of theological litera-
“ ture. Your fine explanation of 2 Peter
“ i. 19. is perfectly just and new, and would
“ do you honour, if drawn out into a proper
“ dissertation.

“ I have never seen the book you speak
“ of. I am, Dear Sir, with the truest esteem,
“ your most affectionate and faithful friend
“ and servant, W. WARBURTON.”

The book alluded to by Warburton as in preparation was written by Dr John Brown of Carlisle, and bears the title of “ Essays on the Characteristics of Lord Shaftesbury.” The author was chaplain to Olbadeston

Bishop of Carlisle.* His Essays on the Characteristics were published a few months after the date of this letter, and did not disappoint the expectation of the public. A second edition was called for in the course of the year.

It was written in consequence of a suggestion from Warburton, who had himself been advised by Mr Pope to write on the subject of Shaftesbury's philosophy ; which he had once seriously intended to have done. †

The power of Shaftesbury's books has been long since exhausted, and will never be revived. His doctrines are so completely exploded, that even they who wrote best against him are forgotten.

With regard to Dr Middleton, it is well known, that at first Warburton defended his books, and was accustomed to speak favourably of his intentions. He had complimented him in the first sketch of the in-

* He had first the living of Lazonby near Carlisle, then the Rectory of Horkesly near Colchester, and at last the Vicarage of Newcastle.

† Letters of Warburton and Hurd, p. 36.

troductioꛢ to his Julian ; but he afterwards suppressed the passage in which he had done so, on the suggestion of a friend, who thought that it would give offence, and might be interpreted as if he had been afraid to enter the lists with Middleton.*

At the date of this letter, however, he continued to think favourably of him, as Dr Erskine knew. . And this had led the latter to make the observation referred to by Warburton, that, had Middleton been better acquainted with biblical literature, he might have found illustrations of his doctrines, of which he had not been able to avail himself. This may be admitted, without adopting either his opinions or the conclusions deduced from them.

The truth is, Middleton did not originally profess, and probably did not at first entertain, any opinions hostile to Christianity. But he was assailed by such a host of opponents, who, from what he had written on the correspondence between the miracles of paganism, and the miracles ascribed to

* Letters of Warburton and Hurd, p. 39.

certain periods of the Christian church, considered him as a champion of infidelity, that he came at last to assume a style and tone, which justly brought the sincerity of his faith into question. He was ultimately chagrined with Warburton, as well as with every individual who combated his opinions, and, as Warburton expresses it to Dr Hurd, “ bit at “ a paragraph in *the Divine Legation*, and “ broke his teeth on it.” * The severity with which his writings were treated, made so deep an impression on him, that, from disappointment and resentment, rather than from dispassionate inquiry, he seems to have at last embraced the wretched and hopeless conclusions which his most determined opponents had imputed to him. “ Had he had,” says Warburton to Hurd, “ I will not say piety, but greatness of mind “ enough, not to suffer the pretended in- “ juries of some churchmen to prejudice “ him against religion, I should love him “ living, and honour his memory when dead. “ But that man, for the discourtesies done

* Letters of Warburton and Hurd, p. 233.

“ him by his miserable fellow-creatures,
“ should be content to divest himself of the
“ true viaticum, the comfort, the solace, the
“ asylum, from all the evils of human life,
“ is perfectly astonishing.” He adds, what
gives a gratifying view of his own state of
mind, “ I believe no one (all things con-
“ sidered) has suffered more from the low
“ and vile passions of the high and low
“ amongst our brethren, than myself. Yet
“ God forbid it should ever suffer me to
“ be cold in the gospel interests, which are,
“ indeed, so much my own, that without it
“ I should consider humanity as the most
“ forlorn part of the creation.” *

Dr Middleton was in bad health when this paragraph was written, and died a few weeks after.

The following letter from Dr Warburton is dated from “ *Prior Park, May 1st, 1753.*

“ DEAR SIR,—I had the honour of your
“ very obliging letter of the 2d past.

“ It would be no ill composition to ac-
“ knowledge the justice of all your correc-

* Letters of Warburton and Hurd, p. 54, 55.

“ tions, if I could arrogate to myself the
“ least part of all the advantageous things
“ you say of my sermons. But matters do
“ not stand upon so good a footing. I can
“ see nothing but friendship in your com-
“ mendations, and nothing but truth in your
“ reproofs.

“ The letter you refer to three years ago
“ is not at hand ; and I have but an im-
“ perfect notion of what it contained. But
“ I may be confident of this, that if in that
“ letter you gave the explanation in ques-
“ tion on 1 Cor. xiii. the thought stuck
“ with me, and I only forgot to whom it
“ originally belonged. You will oblige me
“ in honouring me with your further thoughts
“ on the duration of inspiration. This, for
“ the public good, I would rather wish you
“ would give at large to the world.

“ The author of that most excellent dis-
“ course on *the Pastoral Care* can want no au-
“ thority requisite to recommend and gain a
“ fair hearing to a point of doctrine, ex-
“ tremely delicate, yet vastly honourable to
“ Christianity.

“ My leaving London soon after the receipt of your last favour, makes me unable to say whether the kind present of Mr Wallace’s book which you designed me has reached that place ; but I beg you would accept of my best thanks for it.

“ I hope, Dear Sir, that the change of your ministry is, in all respects, acceptable to you. I should be sorry if a too extensive pastoral care engrossed your whole time. There are many good men fit to discharge that part of the duty of the ministers of religion ; and extremely few that other, which you are so eminently qualified for, the defence of God’s extraordinary dispensations against an unbelieving world.

“ Besides, learning is, in the southern parts at least of this isle, fast on the decline. Ignorance and barbarism are making large strides. A certain jargon of logic, and a loose declamatory eloquence,

* Dr Wallace of Edinburgh’s book on the Populousness of Ancient Nations,—almost the only book professedly written against Hume, which Hume, in his life published by Mr Smith, has noticed and commended.

“ are arms too feeble to defend Ilium. These
“ things should weigh with you, and with
“ every man qualified like you, to employ
“ those other, which are only proper.

“ I think your countrymen have shewn a
“ very becoming resentment against Hume’s
“ books ; one of the most pernicious writers
“ of this age—not for his abilities, but his
“ malice and vanity ; which have led him to
“ treat the most venerable and sacred subjects
“ with an insolence and wantonness, which
“ no age or country but ours would bear.

“ I am, Dear Sir, with the truest esteem,
“ your most affectionate and faithful hum-
“ ble servant, W. WARBURTON.”

The observations suggested by this letter, will occur to every reader. Dr Erskine’s remarks on Dr Warburton’s sermons he had taken in good part ; and, what was not very usual to him, he admitted them to be well founded. He even affects to disclaim the praise intermixed with them, and imputes it to the partiality of friendship.

Warburton did not often receive remarks on his publications with the same temper.

But he had a high opinion of Dr Erskine's capacity, and of the extent of his theological knowledge. In a letter to Dr Hurd, of a later date, he describes him as "a *deep Divine*;" and there can be no doubt, that he considered him as a competent judge, both of the subjects and of the merit of his sermons.

Every one who can compare the opinions of the two men, and their habits of study, will be aware, that this publication must have contained many things in which Dr Erskine would not have agreed with him. In particular, on the doctrine relating to "*the gifts of the Spirit*," which occurs in the sermon on St John, xviii. 38, they could not have thought alike; and they would still less have agreed on the subject of the sermon on 1 Cor. i. 30. Other points of difference are equally obvious; though, as Dr Erskine's letters have not been preserved, every thing which can be said on this head must be entirely conjectural.

When Warburton applied the term "Re-proofs" to Dr Erskine's Remarks, and, at

the same time, acknowledges them to be just, it is clear that they must have been given without reserve, and with so much knowledge of the subject, as to bring their evidence along with them. And when he could impute them to the friendship and kindness of the writer, it is equally obvious, that they must have been expressed with so much delicacy and seasoning, that they gave him no offence, either as a theologian or as an author.

The explanation of 1 Cor. 13, alluded to, is probably that which occurs in the conclusion of Warburton's sermon on 2 Peter, i. 5, 6, 7. It is certainly an ingenious interpretation or commentary, as it is there stated, though there is good reason to doubt, whether the apostle had the same idea in his mind. *

The encroachments of ignorance and barbarity afforded Warburton a perpetual subject of querulous and common-place reflections; originally suggested perhaps by Pope's

* See Note S.

Dunciad, or by some real or fancied opposition to his own books ; but so familiar to him at last, that, even when he has no opposition to stimulate him, they come forward as if they were indisputable axioms.

Mr Hume, whom he affected to *despise** as much as he differed from him, had, about this time, been disappointed of the Moral Philosophy Chair in the University of Edinburgh, upon the *avisandum* (as it is called) of the ministers of Edinburgh. The magistrates and town-council are the patrons of the University. But with regard to certain offices, of which the Moral Philosophy Chair is one, the ministers of Edinburgh have a right, by the constitution of the University, to give an opinion to the patrons.

On this occasion, the ministers gave a decided opinion against Mr Hume, on account of the sceptical opinions which he had published ; and declared their preference of the late James Balfour, Esq. of Pilrig, who was in consequence elected to

* See Note T.

the Professorship,—a man who united to the learning of a philosopher, the purity of mind and the sincerity of a Christian.* From the date, this is undoubtedly the fact to which Warburton alluded, when he mentioned “the becoming resentment against “Mr Hume’s books,” of which Dr Erskine had informed him from Scotland.

* The name of James Balfour of Pilrig ought not to be slightly mentioned by those who had the happiness to be personally acquainted with him. If he wanted the splendour of Mr Hume’s genius, or the vigour and variety of his talents, in the knowledge of ancient literature and philosophy, he was surpassed by few of his contemporaries. For the sound principles which governed his life, for the urbanity and primitive simplicity of his manners, for his conscientious endeavours to be useful in every department to which his influence extended, and for the uniform cheerfulness and kindness of his private intercourse, he will always be remembered with interest and respect by those who knew him, and by his personal friends with veneration.

He published, in 1782, *Philosophical Dissertations*, which probably contained some part of his prelections in the Moral Philosophy Chair, and in the last of these dissertations he gave a short sketch of the evidence of revealed religion, from its connection with providence.

When he resigned the Chair of Moral Philosophy, he became Professor of the Law of Nature and Nations.

He lived to a great age, to which the purity of his life and the placidness and equality of his temper greatly contributed; and died in his 90th year, in peace with God and men, in 1795,

His remarks on the subject are nearly of the same character with the language which was afterwards stigmatized by Hume as “the petulance and scurrility of the Warburtonian school.” Hume applied these expressions to an attack made on him in the name of Dr Hurd, which, from Hurd’s *Life of Warburton*, appears at last to have been the work of Warburton himself.

The last letter from Dr Warburton, which has been found among Dr Erskine’s papers, is of a much later date than any of the preceding; and relates to an application which appears to have been made by Dr Warburton, through the Earl of Mansfield, to obtain for Dr Erskine an appointment to be one of his Majesty’s chaplains in Scotland.

It is dated at Prior Park, June 26, 1766, and evidently supposes that Dr Warburton had before informed him that he intended this application, and probably had mentioned the channel in which it was to be made.

“Dear Sir, The same post which brought me the inclosed, brought me your favour of the 19th.

“ Whatever be the event of the present
 “ solicitation, I am pleased to imagine, by
 “ what I said of every part of your charac-
 “ ter, in the letter laid before General Con-
 “ way, that it will be laying in a stock of
 “ interest for you on some future occasion,
 “ if it should happen to fail in this.

“ I am much obliged to Dr Oswald, to
 “ whom I desire my best respects, and to
 “ you, for the little packet you mention.

“ Believe me to be, Dear Sir, your most
 “ faithful friend, and affectionate humble
 “ servant,

W. GLOCESTER.

“ P.S.—If, by certain modern divines and
 “ philosophers, you mean certain of your
 “ ministers of the new cut, no one can have
 “ a greater contempt for them than I have.
 “ For I think many of them to be more
 “ than half paganized, and their Saviour to
 “ be only another Socrates.”

Within this letter was inclosed a note
 from Lord Mansfield to the Bishop, in the
 following terms:—“ *24th June 1766.*—MY
 “ DEAR LORD, You know I have no greater
 “ pleasure than to obey your commands.

“ Upon receipt of your letter, I took the only way I could make use of. I got Lord Stormont, who has an old acquaintance and friendship with General Conway, to carry to him your Lordship’s letter to me, which I thought ostensible. What effect it will have, I cannot say. I know it ought to be decisive. I desire my best compliments to Mrs Warburton, and am, most sincerely and affectionately, yours, &c. MANSFIELD.”

This application was not successful; and to Dr Erskine the disappointment could not have been considerable. He had the offer of the situation of a King’s chaplain many years after this time, when he was far advanced in life, (in 1793,) which he then thought it proper to decline. He must have been gratified at the time by the application so respectably made for him by the Bishop of Gloucester, though it had no consequences, and was never afterwards renewed.

The acknowledgment to Dr Oswald was most probably occasioned by a present

“ Whatever be the event of the present
 “ solicitation, I am pleased to imagine, by
 “ what I said of every part of your charac-
 “ ter, in the letter laid before General Con-
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The acknowledgment to Dr Oswald was most probably occasioned by a present

criticism, and to polemical and practical theology. It is certainly to his credit, that, on these subjects, he could receive remonstrances from Dr Erskine, if not with conviction, with a respect and deference, which, with the exception perhaps of Dr Hurd, he did not shew to any other individual.*

* See Note U.

CHAPTER VI.

Dr Erskine's Translation from Kirkintilloch to Culross.—His Correspondence with Jonathan Edwards.—The Doctrines of Mr Edwards and Lord Kames.—Dr Erskine's Correspondence with Mr Imrie of St Mungo.

DR ERSKINE was translated from Kirkintilloch, in 1753, to the first charge in the burgh of Culross. He succeeded Mr Hardy, who had been a faithful and conscientious minister, but who died in the prime of life, universally respected and regretted.*

No situation could have been more natu-

* He was the father of the late Dr Hardy of Edinburgh, the distinguished Professor of Church History in the University, and one of the ministers of the city, whose talents were equal to any situation in his profession, but who, like his respectable father, was taken from the world in the middle of life, when his faculties were in their full vigour; before he had been able to do more than give a few detached specimens of his literary and professional abilities; but not before he had convinced his contemporaries of the extent of capacity, discernment, and integrity, which was lost by his death.

rally selected for him, than one in which he had spent a considerable part of his youth in the family of his grandfather. To the gentlemen of the district, and all the parishioners, to whom he had been intimately known from his early years, his translation was a subject of general gratulation.

There are, however, some difficulties to be expected in the discharge of pastoral duty, in a situation where a clergyman has spent his youth, which he would not experience in another situation. A people, who have formerly known him as a boy, do not all at once forget the habits of familiarity which once placed him on a level with themselves ; and are too apt to contrast their recollections of the gaiety and levity of youth, with the earnestness and solemnity of clerical duty.

At the same time, it is equally true, that uniform, decorous, and exemplary manners, from youth to manhood, supported by such indications of worth and principle as are generally relied on, give some peculiar advantages to a minister who is destined to labour where he spent the first years of his

life, among those whose individual views and characters are intimately known to him.

Dr Erskine had happily all the advantages, without any of the inconveniences, of such a situation. He had occasionally resided at Culross in his youth ; but no part of his education had been conducted there. He had had sufficient access to become acquainted with the characters of his parishioners. But, from the rank of his family, as well as from his early habits of study, it was almost impossible that, in his juvenile relaxations, he could ever have found his associates or companions among them.

His relation to some of the first families in the parish certainly added to his influence ; but his chief advantage among the people at large was derived from his personal character. It was thoroughly understood by them, that it had been the first ambition of his life, to be chiefly known by his conscientious endeavours to become “ an able
“ minister of the New Testament, rightly
“ dividing the word of life.”

There was one very favourable circumstance in this situation. Though Culross is neither an extensive nor a populous parish, the pastoral charge is collegiate. Mr Stoddart, who had been the second minister before, succeeded Dr Erskine at Kirkintilloch; and his place was supplied at Culross, in 1754, by Robert Rolland, a man of most uniform and exemplary character—who, for genuine piety—for a fair and sound understanding—for unaffected openness and simplicity of manners—for mildness, modesty, and equality of temper—for the kindness of his heart among his friends—for his resignation to God under great domestic afflictions—for his firm perseverance in following out his best judgment, and in fulfilling, with a steady equanimity, the duties of his own station—was equal to any of his contemporaries, and was surpassed by none of them.

Mr Rolland afterwards succeeded to the first charge, when Dr Erskine was removed to Edinburgh. He lived to a great age, to which the purity of his mind and the gentle-

ness of his temper, in no small degree contributed. He died in 1815, at the age of 87.

Along with this respectable colleague, Dr Erskine had the entire confidence of his parishioners. They heard him in the pulpit with perpetual delight. They saw him in their families as the Messenger of God.

There is some reason, however, to think that, in the latter part of his life, he was not quite satisfied that he had done right in removing from Kirkintilloch to Culross. He was sometimes accustomed to say so to his family. There does not seem to have been much cause for this reflection. The parish of Kirkintilloch was well supplied by his successor, who was both a conscientious minister, and a man of considerable ability. And there can be no doubt, that at Culross his own labours lost no part either of their ardour or of their usefulness.

Besides, though Dr Warburton was not aware of the exact situation of a parish

minister in Scotland, when he supposed literary industry to be separated from pastoral duty, his wishes with regard to the effects of Dr Erskine's translation to Culross were to a certain degree realized. With the assistance of a colleague in the vigour of life, who divided with him both the public and the parochial duty, he had certainly much more leisure to employ, and better opportunities for study, than he could possibly have commanded in his former situation.

He lost, indeed, the advantage of the society at Glasgow, on which he set a considerable value; and he had not the same direct access to books which the libraries of Glasgow afforded him. But his intercourse with the greatest number of his literary friends was more in his power than it had been at Kirkintilloch; and whatever books he required, he had the means of procuring.

They who were acquainted with his habits of industry through life, will readily believe, that the leisure which he found in

this situation was faithfully employed ; though it does not appear that while he continued there he published any thing, excepting a single sermon, preached before the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, in 1756, on the Influence of Religion on National Happiness. It is republished in the first volume of his printed discourses.

In September 1754, he lost his venerable friend, Mr John Maclaurin of Glasgow, with whom, during ten years, he had lived in habits of the most affectionate intercourse. His eminence as a scholar, and as a theologian, as a faithful pastor, and a delightful companion, must have rendered his death a serious loss, not only to his personal friends, but to the community to which he belonged. It was accordingly a subject of deep and universal regret.

Dr Erskine, who had for so many years officiated in the vicinity of Glasgow, and was so well known to its inhabitants, received a very earnest invitation from the kirk-session of the parish, and from the general session of the city, to become Mr Maclau-

rin's successor. He would probably have listened to it, had he followed his inclination; for he had a predilection for the society of Glasgow, and had been in habits of intimacy with many of its most respectable inhabitants. But he found himself under the necessity of declining this invitation. And though his resolution has been sometimes imputed to a dispute which had then arisen between the magistrates and the general session of Glasgow, with regard to the mode of nominating ministers to vacant churches in that city,* it does not appear that this circumstance, if he was at the time acquainted with it, had the chief influence in determining him. For in a letter to Mr Prince of Boston, who, from his attachment to Mr Maclaurin, had probably expressed some solicitude that Dr Erskine should become his successor, he distinctly places his refusal to accept of that situation, on the strong and decided disinclination to it which Mrs Erskine had discovered. He mentions, without reserve,

* Cleland's Annals of Glasgow, p. 435.

his own predilection for Glasgow, but makes no allusion whatever to the difference between the magistrates and the general session.

Mrs Erskine's judgment did not deceive her, and was neither unreasonable nor capricious. She saw, that if he should afterwards be disposed to remove from Culross, he would, in all probability, be invited to one of the churches of Edinburgh at no remote period ; and this situation she preferred, both for the comfort of her family, and the usefulness of her husband.

Though he was not convinced at the time, that her reasons were well-founded, he yielded his own inclination to her's ; and there is no ground, from the remaining part of his life, to regret that he did so, or to think that he himself ever regretted it.

Although neither his private studies, nor his pastoral duties, while he remained at Culross, assiduous as he was in both, can furnish any materials of biography, his communication with some of

his most considerable correspondents ought to be referred to this period.

The most distinguished of them all was Jonathan Edwards, who cannot be slightly mentioned in a narrative of this kind. As a philosopher and a divine, as well as a Christian minister, he held a station of eminence, which, whatever respect has been shewn to his opinions, few of his contemporaries have denied him. His correspondence with Dr Erskine began in 1747 ; and it was continued without interruption till his death, which happened in 1758.

His first letter is dated at Northampton in Massachusetts, where he was then minister of the first congregation with which he was connected. Dr Erskine had sent him "The Remains of Mr Hall," with which their correspondence began ; and on this occasion Mr Edwards expressed, with great tenderness and delicacy, his sympathy with one who had lost his most intimate and estimable friend in the prime of life, the companion of his youth, and, for a considerable time before his death, the de-

lightful and affectionate associate of his studies and of his piety.

In a postscript to this letter he mentioned his book "on Religious Affections," then just published, and at the same time sent his correspondent a copy of it,—a book, of which it is not too much to say, that it is not only worthy of the talents and sincerity of its author, but that, while it shews that he was neither forward nor rash in estimating striking or sudden impressions of religion, it contains more sound instruction on its particular subject, and lays down more intelligible and definite rules to distinguish true from false religion, and to ascertain, by distinct characters, the genuine spirit of vital piety, separated from all fanatical delusions, than any other book which has yet been given to the world.

It was immediately occasioned by the different aspects of what was then called "*the Revival of Religion*" in America, in which there were many of the same features and characters, which distinguished the events which have been adverted to in the west of Scotland ;

but in which Mr Edwards thought he perceived, mixed with many demonstrations of the efficacy of preaching, many false appearances and counterfeits of religion, and many pretended conversions, with regard to which he felt it to be his duty to warn the individuals, and to disabuse the public.

He intended in this publication, after ascertaining the nature and importance of religious affections, to make the distinction precise and definite, between true and false religion. He intended to shew, on the one hand, the specious appearances in the state of the affections, which may often be substituted for the spirit of religion, when they are equally remote from genuine conversion and from real piety ; and, on the other hand, to point out the inseparable and intelligible characters of personal religion, in which its practical and permanent effects are conjoined with its powerful impressions within the breast.

In point of language, this book is undoubtedly defective, like all the writings of

Jonathan Edwards. Though his ideas are always precise, his sentences are often embarrassed, and his reasoning, though it goes deep into the human character, and very successfully lays open the secret recesses of the human heart, is frequently more intricate and metaphysical than his subject required, or than is suited to the capacity of every reader. But with all its defects, his treatise on religious affections, though he had never written any thing besides, would have placed him in the first order of enlightened and practical divines. It requires an intimate knowledge of the human heart, as well as of practical religion, to enable a reader to appreciate its value. But the more attentively the argument contained in it is considered, and is applied to real characters, it will always appear so much the more interesting and conclusive.

In the same postscript to Mr Edwards's first letter to Dr Erskine, he gave him a general sketch of a plan which he had then formed, and which he afterwards executed

with so much ability in his book on the Freedom of the Will ;—a book which, whether his opinions be questioned or adopted, has certainly given him an eminent station both among philosophers and divines.

“ I have thought,” he says, “ of writing
“ something particularly and largely on
“ the Arminian controversy, in distinct dis-
“ courses on the various points in dispute,
“ to be published successively, beginning
“ first with a discourse concerning the free-
“ dom of the will, and moral agency ; en-
“ deavouring fully and thoroughly to state
“ and discuss those points of liberty and
“ necessity, moral and physical inability,
“ efficacious grace, and the ground of vir-
“ tue and vice, reward and punishment,
“ blame and praise, with regard to the dis-
“ positions and actions of reasonable crea-
“ tures.”

Such was the first idea of a work, from which Mr Edwards afterwards derived his chief celebrity as an author. But a considerable time intervened before he found

it possible to make any progress in his design.

In his letters to Dr Erskine, of August and October 1748, he acknowledges the receipt of books connected with his subject, which his correspondent had procured for him; particularly Dr Taylor of Norwich's Treatise on Original Sin, his Key to the Apostolic Writings, and his Paraphrase on the Epistle to the Romans; and says of them, "That the first of these books he had read before, but had not found any opportunity of purchasing; but that the others were entirely new to him." The paraphrase, in particular, he had not heard of, and he appears to have considered it as an important acquisition, as it furnished him with a considerable part of the scriptural arguments of those whose doctrines he intended to combat. "If I had heard of it," he says, "I should not have been easy till I had been possessed of it;" and he adds, "These books, if I live, will probably be of great use to me."

At this time he intended to prosecute his

design without delay. But he was not aware of the difficulties and perplexities in his private situation, which retarded his labours, and at last suspended his studies for several years.

He had at first some time to bestow on two small publications which appeared in 1749; the *Life of David Brainerd*, the distinguished missionary among the American Indians, who died at Northampton; and a Sermon occasioned by his death. But a much more serious obstruction succeeded, which, for a considerable period, superseded all his literary pursuits.

An unfortunate difference arose between him and the people of Northampton, which some busy and malignant spirits contrived to heighten and irritate, till it became quite irreconcilable. It had its origin as early as 1744; though it occasioned no public controversy till 1749 and 1750. It was then publicly agitated, and it ultimately terminated in Mr Edwards's final separation from his congregation at Northampton, in 1751.

No real blame seems to have been due to him, either with regard to the subject of this controversy, or his part in the management of it. On the contrary, from every thing that appears, either in his own letters, or in the papers of his opponents which have been published, he seems not only to have shewn an astonishing degree of temper and forbearance, under the most unprovoked and injurious treatment, but to have left to posterity an example of disinterestedness and purity of principle, in very trying circumstances, in all respects worthy of the venerable character which he sustained through life. *

It cannot be surprising, that, while he was agitated by a controversy, in which not only his usefulness and comfort as a minister, but the independence and permanent resources of his family, were so deeply involved, he should not have been able to apply his thoughts to any literary or theological researches.

* See Note X.

Though he seems to have attempted some sketches on the subject, it does not appear that any part of the plan which he had mentioned to Dr Erskine in 1747 was put into form, or that he had made any progress in arranging it, while he remained at Northampton.

But in 1751, he removed to Stockbridge, in Massachusetts Bay, about sixty miles from Northampton,—a situation of quiet and comfort, much better suited to the habits of a studious man, and which subjected him to none of the bustle or interruptions which he had before experienced.

It was not, however, till the month of July 1752, that he appears to have resumed his studies on the subject of free-will; for, on the 7th of that month, he writes Dr Erskine, that “he hoped soon to be at leisure “to resume his design;” and gives him another sketch of the plan of his book, in which, though there be nothing new, there is more detail than in that which he had formerly sent him. *

* See Note Y.

Whatever opinion may be held with regard to Mr Edwards's argument, it must appear astonishing to those who are capable of appreciating the difficulty of his subject, that, in nine months from the date of this letter, (on the 14th of April 1753,) he could write Dr Erskine, that he had almost finished the first draught of what he originally intended; though he was under the necessity of delaying the publication till he knew the result of proposals which he had circulated for printing his book by subscription.

His book was published in 1754, and though he had made some progress in preparing his materials before he left Northampton, was certainly written, and nearly completed, within the time ascertained by the two letters referred to, and must be admitted to convey a very striking idea, both of his mental resources, and of his literary ardour.

In the letter referred to, of July 1752, he had described the object in his mind to have been, "to consider the nature of that
"freedom of moral agents, which renders

“ them the proper subjects of moral govern-
“ ment, of moral precepts, counsels, calls,
“ motives, persuasions, promises, threaten-
“ ings, praise and blame, rewards and pu-
“ nishments.” And this freedom he repre-
sents as consisting “ in the power of doing
“ what we will, or of acting according to our
“ own choice.”

By moral necessity, he professes to understand, a necessity of connection and consequence, arising from such moral causes, as the strength of inclination or motives, and the connection between these and the volitions or actions of the individual. Moral inability he of course represents as consisting in the want of inclination to pursue worthy or estimable conduct, or in the strength of contrary inclinations.

He attempts to shew, that his general principles are supported by the reason and common sense of mankind ; and to represent the opposite doctrine of free-will, and the consequences resulting from it, as repugnant to the doctrines of religion, to the moral agency of man, and to the sound principles of philosophy.

Lord Kames, who was not more distinguished as a lawyer or a judge, than as a philosopher, had already published his essays "On the Principles of Morality and "Religion," in which he had also discussed the question relating to the liberty or necessity of human actions, and in terms as unqualified as those which Mr Edwards employed, asserted the doctrine of Necessity.

By a letter to Dr Erskine, of December 11, 1755, Mr Edwards acknowledges that he had received from him a copy of Lord Kames's Essays; and tells him, that he had before had an opportunity of reading this book, as well as Mr Hume's Essay on the same subject.

When Lord Kames published his Essays, they excited a great clamour against him in Scotland, on the supposition that he had published doctrines subversive of the fundamental principles of Christianity; and such was the impression which this assertion made on the public mind, that a preacher, of the name of Anderson, actu-

ally commenced a prosecution against him, as an elder of the church, before the presbytery of Edinburgh ; affirming, that, in the doctrine of necessity which he maintained, there were not only heretical opinions, which, as an elder of the church, he could not lawfully circulate, but principles subversive of all religious and moral obligation.

This prosecution gave his Lordship considerable uneasiness. He was much better acquainted with the speculations of philosophers than with theological controversies ; and knew better how to defend among philosophers a speculative dogma, than how to protect himself in the church against a charge of heresy.

Dr Wallace, the celebrated author of the dissertation “ on the Numbers of Mankind, “ and the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” informed him of what he seems not to have known before, (and he received his information with much eagerness and gratitude,) that the doctrine of Necessity had been maintained by the greatest and soundest divines of the Christian church ; refer-

ring him particularly to St Augustine, Calvin, Turretine, Pictet, &c.

His Lordship afterwards published a pamphlet in defence of his Essays, in which he availed himself of the doctrine asserted by these divines, and, above all, of Mr Edwards's book, which he celebrates with unreserved praise, as equally honourable to his talents and to his orthodoxy. He took some pains to distinguish between the doctrine maintained by himself, and the Fate asserted by the Stoics on the one hand, and the Liberty of indifferencé contended for by the Arminian divines on the other.

The substance of this publication was afterwards printed in an appendix to the last edition of his Essays, published by the author in 1779.

Dr Erskine had sent the first edition of Lord Kames's Essays to Mr Edwards. And, in return, Mr Edwards addressed a letter to him, of the 5th of July 1757, which was first printed separately, as he intended, and was afterwards subjoined to

the Edinburgh edition of his book on the Freedom of the Will, in 1768, under the title of a “ Letter from Mr Edwards to a “ Minister of the Church of Scotland.”

In this letter he attempts to state what he conceived to be the difference between his own doctrine, and the principles maintained by Lord Kames; and represents it as of so much importance, as to lead to very opposite conclusions.

On the other hand, Lord Kames was as much distinguished by the fairness, as by the ingenuity, of his speculations. Though in philosophy he often formed his judgment hastily, and, of course, fell into many mistakes, he has publicly retracted a greater number of errors, into which he had been unwarily betrayed, than almost any other writer of celebrity who can be mentioned. He was apt to seize a sudden thought, and pursue it with avidity, without having sufficiently considered or examined it; and, of consequence, in many instances, without having perceived a fallacy, which he found afterwards to be involved in it. It appears

to have frequently happened, that the prosecution of other subjects, or his conversation with other men, assisted him to detect the errors which he had thus hastily adopted, and to appreciate the circumstances which had, in the first instance, contributed to mislead his judgment. But, what is equally to his credit as an author and as a man, as soon as he thought he perceived that he had published a false or an incorrect opinion, he did not hesitate to say so, if an opportunity was given him. This is not a very common practice among philosophers ; and, though some of his readers may think that there are articles in his original productions left untouched, which, on the same principle, might have required a revisal, this cannot appear surprising to those who recollect the number and extent of his publications, and the late period of life at which he continued to write.

In the preface to the edition of his *Essays*, which was published in 1779, he has publicly retracted a great proportion of the doctrines on Liberty and Ne-

cessity, which had been objected to by Mr Edwards.

He had originally represented the terms “*Necessary, Impossible, and Unavoidable,*” as equally applicable, and, in the same sense, to Moral and Physical Necessity. But he afterwards states an important distinction on this subject, by observing, that, under the influence of a physical cause, a man *is passive*, or is acted upon; whereas, under the influence of a moral cause, *he himself acts*,—that a physical cause is generally exerted against his will, by constraint or coercion; but that a moral cause always operates, not by force or coercion, but by solicitation and persuasion, applied to the judgment.*

Though the expressions to which Jonathan Edwards objected are still retained, these explanations, though perhaps not very consistent with them, in a great measure take away their force.

A considerable part of the opposition which Mr Edwards found in Lord Kames’s

* *Essays on Morality and Natural Religion*, p. 165, 166, 167, *passim*.

doctrine to his own, arose from the assertion made by his Lordship of a deceitful or delusive feeling or apprehension of liberty, which he originally represented as universal. From this idea he departs explicitly in the preface before referred to; and he congratulates himself on having at last placed Morality on a foundation which has no delusion in it.

Mr Edwards had besides particularly objected to his doctrine of Chance, or Contingency, as applied, as well to what arises from moral causes, as to events in the material world. His Lordship retains what he had published on this subject in the first and second editions of his Essays, for the purpose of intimating that he had changed his opinion, and was then convinced that he ought to have expressed himself differently. “Time,” he says, “productive of many changes, has upon the thinking part of mankind a great influence in detecting errors. It is now my opinion, that there is no such thing in nature as a sense of Chance or contingency. By the

“ expression, that such a thing happened
“ by chance, nothing is or can be meant,
“ but that we are ignorant of the cause;
“ and that, for aught we know, the event
“ might have happened or not happened.
“ With respect to contingency, future e-
“ vents are said to be contingent, when
“ they cannot be foreseen.” *

There are, unquestionably, points in which his Lordship's doctrines are still different from the doctrines of Mr Edwards, and some in which he has changed the expressions which Mr Edwards adverted to, without having materially altered the ideas conveyed in them.

This is not surprising. For, in making the alterations which his own reflections had suggested for his last edition, he has not always adapted to them what he had written before, but has left sentences and paragraphs as he had originally expressed them, without attempting to model them

* *Essays on Morality and Natural Religion*, p. 194, 195. Edition 1779.

anew, so as exactly to suit his latest thoughts on the subject.

But it is plain that he intended to obviate a considerable part of the objections which had been made to his doctrines ; and that he stated, without reserve, the points on which he had changed his opinions. He seems to have been particularly solicitous to remove the objections which had been made by Mr Edwards ; and it ought to be added, that he concludes his remarks on what had been written against him, by delivering, as his settled opinion, what coincided exactly with the ideas of Mr Edwards, that the Arminian doctrine of liberty would, in effect, “ introduce into this world
“ blind chance, confusion, and anarchy ;
“ and that any solid reformation of the Ar-
“ minian doctrine must infallibly lead to
“ the opinions of Calvin and our other re-
“ formers.” *

Many readers will think, that, on the metaphysical question, the opinions of Lord Kames and Mr Edwards were not in the

* Appendix to Essay on Liberty and Necessity, p. 221.

end essentially different ; and that the shades of difference which are still to be found in their mode of conducting the argument, have not much influence on their conclusions.

It is not clear that Mr Edwards would have allowed this to be the fact. But he did not live to see Lord Kames's latest thoughts on the subject.

In the conclusion of his own book, he enters deeply into the importance and consequences of the system which he maintained, as he supposed it to affect the doctrines and the practical influence of Christianity ; and he endeavoured to discuss these points more minutely still, in a letter which he addressed to Dr Erskine, of the 3d of August 1757, a few days after the date of the letter already mentioned, which he sent him for publication.*

The spirit which Mr Edwards discovers in his Inquiry, and in all his correspondence on the subject, demonstrates his sin-

* See Note Z.

cerity in the doctrines which he maintained, and his firm persuasion of their importance to the interests of practical religion. He was not less sincere in believing the opposite opinions to be equally contrary to philosophical truth, and to practical Christianity.

It must be allowed, besides, that he was not indebted to any other writer for the most important part of his materials, which he appears to have drawn almost entirely from his own reflections and resources. Though in many points he coincides with the opinions of authors, whose productions do not appear to have reached him, it is impossible to deny, that the structure and the ingenuity of his argument are his own, or to withhold from him the praise due to an original writer.

On the other hand, some of the most enlightened philosophers, and most zealous friends of religion, find great difficulty in adopting his system, or of acquiescing in the acute and subtle argument by which he has supported it.

His reasonings on the general doctrine of Necessity are certainly more plausible and popular, than his attempt to reconcile that doctrine with the moral agency of man, or the view which he has given of the *liberty* of human actions. On this point, his argument appears to a great proportion of his readers to have completely failed. And, what is very remarkable, the “ Idea of Human Liberty,” which he has adopted in connection with his “ Doctrine of Necessity,” is exactly the same with that which was given long before by Hobbes and Anthony Collins; though there are circumstances which make it probable, that he was not otherwise acquainted with their writings, than by quotations from them which he found in other books.

Hobbes, he says expressly, he had never read;* and it is more than probable, that he was equally unacquainted with Collins. Yet the identity of their opinions with regard to human liberty is not to be question-

* Inquiry, p. 321. London Edition, 1816.

ed. Hobbes places it in "a man's having
"power to do what he will;" Collins in
"a power which a man has to do as he wills
"or pleases;" and Mr Edwards in "the
"power, opportunity, or advantage, that
"any one has to do as he pleases;"* or, as
he expresses it otherwise, in "† the power
"or opportunity to do as he wills or
"chooses."

The *Conclusions* of Hobbes and Collins
are, indeed, not only extremely different
from those of Mr Edwards, but are direct-
ly the reverse of what he professes to esta-
blish. But his confidence in the doctrine
was not shaken by their pernicious applica-
tion of it, of which he seems to have been
fully aware. "Let his opinion be what
"it will," he says, referring to Mr Hobbes,
"we need not reject all truth which is de-
"monstrated by clear evidence, merely be-
"cause it was once held by some bad man.
"This great truth, *that Jesus is the Son of*
"God, was not spoiled, (or was not less the

* Inquiry, p. 38.

† Ibid. in Remarks on Principles of Morality, p. 16.

“ truth,) because it was once and again proclaimed with a loud voice by the Devil.” *

Mr Edwards himself, as has been already stated, certainly considered his doctrine as involving the substance as well as the practical effects of Christianity, and the contrary opinions as subversive of both.

But, on the other hand, some of his latest and most distinguished admirers, who celebrate his argument as both profound and unanswerable, and who consider him as the writer above all others who has done most justice to this intricate subject, have deduced conclusions from his doctrine of the most pernicious tendency, and the most remote from his intention.

Dr Priestley, who has given the most flattering opinion which could well be expressed of Jonathan Edwards's Argument, in his preface to the Examination of the Philosophy of Dr Reid, Dr Beattie, and Dr Oswald, has the following remarkable paragraph in another publication. “ A Ne-

* Remarks on Principles of Morality, p. 16.

“ cessarian who believes that nothing goes
 “ wrong, but that every thing is under the
 “ best direction possible, cannot accuse him-
 “ self of having done wrong, in the ultimate
 “ sense of the words. He has, therefore, in
 “ this strict sense, nothing to do with re-
 “ pentance, confession, or pardon, which
 “ are all adapted to a different, imperfect,
 “ and fallacious view of things.” *

Mr Belsham, who adopts the same opinions with Priestley, has laid down the two following positions, in which the same doctrine is involved. “ Remorse is the exquisitely painful feeling which arises from the belief, that, in circumstances precisely the same, we might have chosen and acted differently. This *fallacious* feeling is *superse-eded* by the doctrine of necessity.” † — “ Remorse supposes free will. It arises from forgetfulness of the precise state of mind when the action was performed. *It*

* Priestley's Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit, in which his doctrine of philosophical necessity is illustrated. Vol. II. p. 147. Birmingham, 1782.

† Belsham's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, p. 284.

*“ is of little or no use in moral discipline. In
“ a degree it is even pernicious.” **

Jonathan Edwards would have viewed such conclusions from his argument, not only with contempt, but with abhorrence. Whatever consequences others have deduced from his opinions, he believed the doctrine of necessity, as he represents it, to lie at the foundation of all sound morality and evangelical religion. And that his own ideas on this subject might be fairly stated, his last letter to Dr Erskine has been already referred to, and is inserted at full length in a note.* He could not anticipate the language of Priestley and Belsham. But his letter demonstrates the purity of his own views both of Christian doctrine and practical morals. Whatever opinion, therefore, may be held with regard to the metaphysical argument, there can be but one opinion with regard to the superior talents,

* Belsham's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, p. 406.

† Note Aa.

the Christian spirit, and the pure intentions of Jonathan Edwards.

A few months after the date of his last letter to Dr Erskine which has been mentioned, Mr Edwards was removed from Stockbridge to become President of the College of New Jersey,—a station in which much was expected from his talents, and more from his eminent zeal in the service of religion and literature. But Providence did not permit these sanguine expectations to be realized.

He had never had the small-pox ; and when he found himself placed among young people who are peculiarly liable to the infection of this dangerous disease, he thought it his duty to give an example in favour of the practice of inoculation, against which there were then strong prejudices in America. Though the disease had at first no virulent appearances, it settled chiefly on his mouth and throat, and ultimately occasioned his death.

He died on the 22d of March 1758, a

few months after he had been admitted President of the College of New Jersey.

He was in full possession of his faculties to the last moment of his life, and died in the most delightful and enviable state of mind ; one of the few victims of a practice by which so many lives were afterwards preserved.

Dr Erskine's impression of the irreparable loss sustained by his death, he expressed in a letter to Mr Maculloch of Cambuslang, who had been long a correspondent of his deceased friend. This letter is dated August 8, 1758, and contains the following paragraph : “ The loss sustained
“ by his death, not only by the College of
“ New Jersey, but by the church in gene-
“ ral, is irreparable. I do not think our age
“ has produced a divine of equal genius or
“ judgment ; and much did I hope from
“ Prince Town College having such a man
“ at their head ; from his living to write on
“ the different branches of the Arminian
“ Controversy ; and from his being removed
“ to a place where he had the advantage of

“books, which Northampton or Stock-bridge could not afford him.” He adds, “I hope his book on Original Sin is finished and printed.”

A considerable number of his posthumous productions were edited and prefaced by Dr Erskine. They bear evident marks of the vigour of intellect, and zealous sincerity in religion, which uniformly distinguished their author. But some of them have certainly many of the disadvantages of unfinished and posthumous publications.

The work on Original Sin, however, to which Dr Erskine alluded, had been prepared for publication by Mr Edwards himself; though the printing, which had been begun during his life, was not completed till after his death.

This book, for ingenuity or originality, or for vigorous and acute argument, is inferior to nothing else which he has written. It is common, indeed, to reject, without examination, the doctrine which he maintains, as either untenable or absurd. But it will not be easy to produce a publication

in which his argument has been fairly met by those who have most affected to despise his conclusions.

This long digression will scarcely be forgiven by fastidious readers ; and even by those who are not disinclined to the subject, it may be thought to have exceeded its natural bounds.

But it should be considered, that it relates to a subject, in which Dr Erskine took a deep and personal interest at this period of his life, and which had more or less influence on his conduct, and on his habits of thinking, to the end of it ; and that at least some part of the facts related are not familiar to many readers, who are still accustomed to hear the name of Jonathan Edwards repeated, both by the admirers and the opponents of his writings.

While Dr Erskine remained at Culross, he had another remarkable correspondent ; Mr David Imrie, then minister of Dalton, and afterwards of St Mungo in Dumfriesshire. He was a man of very considerable abilities, and was capable of a great degree

of literary industry and research. Several years of his life were employed in the study of the prophetical scriptures, in which he believed he had made some important discoveries with regard to events predicted, both in the Old and in the New Testament; which, he persuaded himself, were to happen within a very few years of the time when he applied his mind to the subject.

He appears to have written a book on the subject, which was never published. But having great confidence in the result of his investigations, he lodged with Dr Erskine, and some of his other friends, a variety of papers which contained a general sketch of his interpretations, for the purpose of enabling them to compare them afterwards with events which he supposed to have been predicted, and to be at no great distance.

These papers certainly exhibit a great extent of learning as well as depth of thought. But, like many other interpreters of prophecies not yet fulfilled, Mr Imrie allowed himself to rely with too much confidence on

what he considered as his discoveries, with regard to the meaning and accomplishment of particular predictions, and, like many zealots in prophetic studies, “almost persuaded himself” at last, that his conclusions were infallible.

In the only letter of Dr Erskine’s on the subject which has been preserved, without pretending to combat opinions which Mr Imrie supported with so much ingenuity and confidence, and which he had not considered with the same attention, he satisfies himself with reminding his friend how many good men had been positive, and yet had made great mistakes, on the same subject; and how much careful and impartial examination was necessary, before he could in prudence be warranted to publish his interpretations. He does not discourage him from publishing, if his opinions should remain unchanged, after his most dispassionate researches; but he recommends to him some books, from which, in his apprehension, he might have received considerable advantage.

Mr Imrie lived to see many of the minute interpretations, in which he had most confidence, contradicted by events. He would have contemplated with amazement other events which have happened since his death, in which his conjectures and interpretations would have appeared to him to have been very near the truth, though they were not completely verified. The events, in particular, of the year 1794, (a year which he had expressly mentioned as introducing most remarkable revolutions,) though not precisely what he had supposed them, had so much apparent affinity to his representation, as would, if he had witnessed them, have gone far to confirm some of his most sanguine anticipations. Some of the conjectures which he mentioned with most confidence, he would have imagined to be verified by subsequent events; and the very singular history of the last thirty years, would, if he had been alive, have certainly revived his prophetic studies though they have not ultimately confirmed his interpretations.

Mr Imrie was a worthy and respectable man, whose intentions were perfectly pure, and who possessed a very considerable portion, both of literature and talents. But he was the dupe of his own ingenuity,* and of his sanguine temper; as almost every individual, more or less, has been, who has allowed his mind to be exclusively engrossed by the same studies.

While Dr Erskine was corresponding with Mr Imrie, it certainly appears, that he paid some attention to the subjects by which his friend was so much engrossed. And from the manner in which he was accustomed to mention them in the latter part of his life, it is probable that he went as far into them at this time, as to convince himself, that he could employ his time much better in other studies; and that the attempt to interpret prophecies not yet fulfilled, is always uncertain, and seldom successful. He has been frequently heard to say, that however others may have succeeded, he was never able to satisfy his own mind in such inquiries.

He certainly derived one advantage from Mr Imrie's correspondence, of which he afterwards often availed himself. He saw the importance of Hebrew literature to every interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures. It appears from his correspondence, that Mr Imrie gave him very useful advice and assistance on this subject, and that he then applied his mind more resolutely than before, to the study of the Hebrew language, which he prosecuted with his usual ardour and success. A considerable portion of his time was probably devoted to it, from 1754 to 1757; and he was ultimately a good Hebrew scholar.

CHAP. VII.

Dr Erskine's Translation to Edinburgh.—He publishes Theological Dissertations.—His Controversy with Mr Wesley.—His Publications on the American Controversy ; and on the Bill for Relief of Roman Catholics in Scotland.—Mr Burke's Letter to him.

IN the autumn of 1758 Dr Erskine was translated from the parish of Culross to one of the churches in the city of Edinburgh.

There were four vacancies in the pastoral charges of the city which were filled up at the same time. The three ministers who were appointed along with Dr Erskine to supply them, were certainly among the most considerable clergymen whom Scotland has ever produced—Dr Macqueen, equally distinguished by the vigour of his understanding, and the extent of his literature*—Mr Lundie, who was then consi-

* Dr Macqueen possessed an extent of knowledge and literature in which very few of his contemporaries surpassed

dered as one of the most eminent preachers in Scotland, though a weak and distemper-

him. Though he published little, his information, on every subject to which he applied his mind, was known to be so exact and minute, that, in matters of research, his literary friends had frequent recourse to him, to give them confidence in their own investigations. Dr Robertson himself was accustomed to say, that on subjects connected with geography in particular, he never relied on any description of his own, till he had received the opinion of Dr Macqueen.

The only book which Dr Macqueen published is entitled, "Letters on Mr Hume's History," which appeared in 1756, when he was minister of Stirling. It contains strictures on that celebrated work, which go deep into the subject, and into what he considered as false views of our civil and religious history. The justice of his strictures, and the ability and learning with which they are stated, cannot well be questioned by fair and competent judges of that subject. Though Mr Hume has sometimes expressed himself differently, he could not always conceal his real hostility to civil and religious liberty, or to those who zealously contended for either. With regard to Dr Macqueen's book, he followed his usual maxim, and made no reply. But he appears, in the subsequent editions of his History, to have silently made alterations on many of the passages objected to, such as render it now extremely difficult to trace the paragraphs to which Dr Macqueen's animadversions apply. Some of them certainly remain unchanged. In other instances, the alterations exhibit a striking view of the address with which Mr Hume endeavoured to escape from strictures which he felt to be just. Independent of this circumstance, the difficulty of tracing in the later editions, references which apply only to the first, which is now scarcely to be found, has, in a great measure, taken off the public attention from Dr Macqueen's book. It is notwithstanding a book of in-

ed sight, which produced habits of seclusion, and an incapacity for regular studies, rendered his public duty afterwards both unequal and uncertain—and Dr Robertson, who was equal to any situation which strength of understanding, or splendour of talents, can reach; and whose eminence as an historian has raised him above all his contemporaries.

Four such men introduced into the churches of Edinburgh on the same day, reflected no common degree of honour on the community which had the penetration

disputable merit, equally distinguished by the learning of a scholar, and the urbanity of a gentleman. It gave him so much reputation when it was first published, that one of the first dignitaries of the southern part of the island employed a friend to intimate to him, that if he should be disposed to connect himself with the Church of England, he might depend on receiving high preferment. This proposal, for obvious reasons, he declined; though it distinctly shews what the public opinion in England then was, not merely of the merit of his book, but of the doctrines maintained in it. He would certainly have done honour to any church, by the worth and dignity of his private character, as well as by the extent of his literary acquisitions. It is only to be regretted, that he who knew so much, and whose knowledge was so extremely accurate, and so much at his command, should have published so little to the world.

to select them. And their professional eminence, as well as their literary and personal characters, which will never be mentioned among those who knew them, but with delight and veneration, has left a striking example for the direction of those on whom the appointment of their successors has devolved.

There were then only nine churches in the city, of which seven were collegiate, and two were single charges. According to the established usage of that time, Dr Macqueen and Mr Lundie, as the senior ministers, were placed in the two vacant collegiate churches; and Dr Robertson and Dr Erskine, as the juniors, in the two single charges.

Dr Erskine became minister of the New Greyfriars' Church, where he continued to officiate for nine years.

The public service of a single charge in Edinburgh, as it was then performed, connected with the private and parochial duties which Dr Erskine most conscientiously and minutely discharged, undoubtedly required a great degree both of professional industry and activity.

Besides the public prayers, there were three discourses to be delivered every Lord's Day—In the morning a lecture, or exposition of some considerable portion of Scripture, followed by a sermon; and another sermon in the afternoon.

They who are as uniform and conscientious in their preparation for the pulpit, as Dr Erskine was, and to whom the sermons which he published are familiar; and they who can recollect how indefatigable he was in visiting the families of his parish, in attending the sick and the dying, not only in his own parish, but in every quarter of the city where he was in any degree interested, can form some idea of the ardour which he at this time possessed.

He had much besides to occupy his time in the ecclesiastical courts, in the charitable corporations and societies of the city, and in every private association where he believed himself to be useful. While he was in good health, he was almost never absent where his presence was required.

He had a principle to which he steady-

ly adhered through life, and from which he allowed nothing to divert him, which always occupied a certain portion of his time, in addition to all that was necessary for his public and professional labours. He considered it as an indispensable, and even as a moral duty, which every man owes to himself, and to his station in society, to maintain a regular intercourse with the relations of his family, and with his private friends.

On this point, as indeed on every other which has been mentioned, he endeavoured to follow out a regular system, to which he adhered as steadily as the variety of his occupations would permit ; so arranging his plans and his time, as to prevent, as much as possible, one duty from encroaching on another ; and never allowing himself to be diverted from the great objects of his life, by any inferior considerations.

This branch of his character deserves to be mentioned with particular distinction. No individual who lives in a situation in

which the same habits can be maintained, in a consistency with more important duties, can be justified in neglecting them. Our family relations are our natural associates; and, when they are joined to our personal friends, excepting only the bonds of principle, create the most universal and most delightful ties of human life.

On the other hand, whatever seems to separate those whom nature has united, is equally unfriendly to their permanent interests, and to their personal comfort. Weakness of understanding, or defects of temper, are often seen to occasion, among family connections, competitions and jealousies, which lead to habits of a very different kind; but in no instance, without doing a material injury to the individuals themselves, and even to their children after them.

The opposite fact is a matter of daily experience. Where the intimate associations of private life are regulated and cultivated by the principles of duty, as well as by good

affections, they go far indeed to promote both its satisfactions and its tranquillity.

On this subject, Dr Erskine, undoubtedly, gave a distinguished example to his family and his friends, on which they who have survived him will always look back with veneration.

While he enjoyed good health, in the midst of his varied and important occupations, he mixed a great deal in society, both in the city and at home. And they who had the happiness to associate with him frequently, either in his own house, or in more general society, will always recollect, with delight, the native simplicity and good humour, the cheerful and amusing conversation, the variety of sound information, and the kind and affectionate manners, by which they were uniformly attracted to him.

Yet, with all the multiplicity of his occupations, and the steadiness with which he followed out the rules by which every one of them was kept in its own place; with all the eagerness with which he seemed to enter into every thing, that was either in-

teresting or agreeable to him ; his preparation for the pulpit was never at any time neglected, or even slightly or carelessly attended to ; nor were his literary pursuits at any one period of his life suspended.

He knew how to employ what the late Sir David Dalrymple (Lord Hailes) was accustomed to call "*the corners of time*,"—the shorter or longer intervals of leisure which every day afforded him—and from this circumstance he was seldom behind in any part of the duties by which he governed his life.

His preparation for the pulpit was almost never superseded by any other occupation. But the habit of applying to it uniformly from his early life, supported by the acuteness of his faculties, and by the facility with which he could command his theological and practical knowledge, rendered this part of his duty rather relaxation than labour ; and though he considered it as the leading object of his life, prevented it from materially interfering with the ardour or

diligence with which he continued to prosecute his literary acquisitions.

On the 28th of November 1766, he received an unsolicited degree of Doctor in Divinity from the University of Glasgow. In the minute of the Faculty which conferred it, there is a marked encomium inserted on his “undoubted probity, ingenuity, and learning.”

Were theological degrees always conferred from the same confidence in the personal and literary characters of the individuals receiving them, they would reflect as much honour and distinction on the universities, as the graduates could receive from their diplomas. Dr Erskine’s character as a theologian, and as a man of letters, had been so long established, that it is more natural to ask, why he did not receive this degree at an earlier period, than why it was at last conferred?

Before this event, he had published, in 1764, an octavo volume of Theological Dissertations. The three dissertations which stand first in the volume had never before

been published. The two last are republications of treatises, which have been already adverted to ; the one, of “ The Law of Nature, as sufficiently promulgated to the Heathens, in opposition to Dr Campbell,” and the other, on “ the Frequent Dispensation of the Lord’s Supper,” connected with an overture from the Synod of Glasgow. With regard to *these* dissertations, it is unnecessary to add any thing to what has already been stated. But the concluding paragraph of the preface to this volume, which relates to the dissertation in answer to Dr Campbell, deserves to be inserted here, as it contains Dr Erskine’s later thoughts on the subject of that dissertation. “ The general argument,” he says, “ of the fourth dissertation, appears to me in the same light as it did three-and-twenty years ago, when I first published it. But since that time I have been fully convinced, that many of the most celebrated philosophers entertained sentiments absolutely inconsistent with the belief of the soul’s immortality, and of future rewards and pu-

“ nishments ; and have seen considerable
“ cause to suspect, that, under the devout
“ expressions of the Stoic philosophers, a
“ system was disguised, nearly allied to that
“ of Spinosa.”

In the same preface he professes to have been originally led to the subject of his first dissertation, by Dr Warburton's book on the Divine Legation of Moses, and by Professor Venema's Dissertations, printed at Harlingen in 1731. The substance of it had been read to the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1751, or about that time. There can be no doubt, that, at this period, Warburton's opinions had a considerable influence on Dr Erskine's studies, and on his habits of thinking. He agrees with him in his general views of the character of the Sinai covenant, as relating to blessings which were merely temporal and external ; and he applies this doctrine with considerable effect to the interpretation of particular texts in the New Testament, which are intended to illustrate the doctrines of Christianity, by an appeal to the Old Testament

Scriptures. In some points he differs from Warburton. But even where their opinions are the same, his statements and illustrations are his own, and are supported by a very considerable degree of ingenuity and learning.

The second dissertation, on the Character and Privileges of the Christian Church, and on Dr Taylor's Key to the Apostolic Writings, has a natural connection with the subject of the first dissertation, or rather is a natural sequel to the argument which is there maintained. He had there asserted, that, under the Old Testament, men, destitute of inward piety, had a just claim, by the tenor of the Sinai covenant, to certain external blessings, as members of the Jewish church. And, in the course of his argument, several texts had been illustrated, which he considered as representing the Christian dispensation as, in this respect, diametrically opposite to the Jewish.

Some other writers, and particularly Dr Taylor of Norwich, have maintained, on the contrary, that there is an external cove-

nant subsisting, under the Christian as well as under the Jewish dispensation, by which individuals who profess Christianity, though they are inwardly disaffected to God and to goodness, are entitled to certain external blessings and privileges in the church of Christ. He supposed this doctrine to have received a considerable degree of countenance from the incautious manner in which the common distinction between the visible and invisible church has been often represented.

He proposed, therefore, in his second dissertation, to inquire, whether this representation of Christianity has any foundation in the sacred oracles; and whether the proofs of such an external covenant, under the Old Testament, can be at all applied to the dispensation of the gospel. He animadverted particularly on Dr Taylor's interpretations, in his *Key to the Apostolic Epistles*; and, on the whole, endeavours to shew, that the general language and spirit of the New Testament place the character of Christianity in direct opposition to the

view which he had before given of the Jewish Church, and to the doctrine asserted by Dr Taylor, in which a covenant of external blessings is equally assigned to both.

This dissertation discovers a great extent of scriptural knowledge, and of critical ability; and deserves very serious attention from those who apply themselves to the interpretation of the apostolical epistles.

The general object of the third dissertation, on Christian Faith, is to distinguish it as a principle of the mind, from the effects which it produces on the heart and conduct of the believer. As a principle, he considers it as consisting simply in persuasion or assent, whether founded on testimony or intrinsic evidence, with regard to the essential facts and doctrines of revelation; and this he endeavours to distinguish precisely from its practical effects on the choice, the affections, the temper, and behaviour, of the individuals.

This dissertation is another specimen of profound scriptural knowledge, and learned argument; and, independent of the leading

idea which it professes to illustrate, will always be read with advantage by those who wish to become biblical scholars.

Every part of this volume is worthy of its author. And it cannot but be a subject of regret, that, at this period of his life, when his vigour was entire, and when his literary and theological researches were prosecuted with all the steadiness of his character, he did not favour the public with a greater number of such original productions ; or that he had not applied his mind to some great literary and theological work, for which the acuteness of his faculties, and the extent of his information, so eminently qualified him.

But present usefulness was at all times the leading object of Dr Erskine's life. A very considerable portion of his time was employed in giving small publications to the world, which he thought were required by the civil or religious state of the country, or which could, in his apprehension, contribute, in any degree, to the edification or comfort of the society in which he

lived. He was quite unsolicitous about his literary character, or his posthumous fame. He had frequently some literary plans in his mind, the prosecution of which was always superseded by something which appeared to him more necessary, or more useful at the time when he applied to it; and with regard to which he thought he could bring forward either forcible argument, or useful and important information.

He would have certainly raised his character as an author higher, and his usefulness might have been both more extensive and more permanent, by means of a great literary undertaking. But the plan which he followed seemed to him to have the advantage of more immediate utility, to a greater number of individuals during his own life, than he could have connected with any considerable publication of learning or research. The interest which it created was, no doubt, comparatively a local and temporary interest, which was too apt to be forgotten with the occasions which produced it; though, it must be admitted

at the same time, that there are some of his smaller publications which are calculated to be permanently useful, and which deserve to survive many more elaborate performances.

Dr Erskine's controversy with Mr Wesley is, by its date, the next event in his life which ought to be mentioned.

After the death of Mr Hervey, (the author of "The Meditations," which bear his name, and of the book entitled "Theron and Aspasio,") there was published in England a volume, which has the title of "Aspasio Vindicated, in a Series of Letters," as the work of the same author. In 1765, this publication was reprinted at Edinburgh, with a preface by Dr Erskine.

In Mr Hervey's Vindication of "Aspasio," he had particularly defended his doctrine against certain animadversions of Mr Wesley; and had remarked, with some severity, on some of Mr Wesley's opinions, as, in his apprehension, subversive of the doctrine of the church of England, as well as of the genuine doctrines of the gospel.

In Dr Erskine's preface, he had followed out Mr Hervey's ideas on this subject, with a view to undeceive such of the inhabitants of Edinburgh, as had been persuaded to join Mr Wesley's religious societies, without being aware of his real opinions.

He refers them to what Mr Hervey had written on the subject. But he quotes besides a variety of paragraphs from Mr Wesley's publications, to shew, not only that Mr Hervey's remarks were well-founded, but that the good people of Edinburgh were completely imposed on, with regard to the real opinions held by this patriarch of the Methodists.

After pointing out, by quotations from his writings, a variety of articles in which he conceived Mr Wesley's avowed opinions to be in direct hostility with the established doctrines of the church of Scotland, he comes at last to represent what he considered as the disingenuity of his management. It appeared to him, that he gave a different aspect to his opinions in different places, and that he so arranged the rules which he

laid down to his preachers, as to suit them to the supposed opinions of the people among whom they officiated, and in different places, to contrary opinions.

He states, in particular, that, while Mr Wesley directed his preachers in England to read carefully to all the people his tracts entitled, "A Preservative against unsettled Notions," and his "Serious Thoughts concerning Perseverance and Predestination," the Methodist teachers in Scotland appeared to secrete from the greatest part of their religious societies, these, and all his controversial writings, in which his opinions are farthest removed from the doctrines taught by the Scottish church, and generally embraced by the people of Scotland; and probably did so, lest they should discover something so repugnant to their habits of thinking, as to abate their fondness for such a spiritual guide.

Mr Wesley had said, that, whatever may be the effect of the doctrines of Calvinism to those who have been educated in the belief of them, they are shewn by experience

to have the effect of deadly poison to those who have lately embraced them. He had also laid it down as a prudential rule, that, in England, the preachers of methodism should not frequent any dissenting meetings, but should regularly attend the established churches.

On the first of these points, Dr Erskine observed, that it was a discovery exclusively made by Mr Wesley, that poison may prove harmless, where men have been early and long accustomed to swallow it; and that this he seemed to have intended to affirm of the people of Scotland, who had been so long accustomed to the *supposed* poisonous doctrines of Calvinism.

On the other point, he stated, that, in England, Mr Wesley's preachers had been directed to give their personal attendance in the established churches, lest, if they had gone to the dissenters, their people should have followed their example; while in Scotland, his preachers universally attended, not the Episcopal meetings, but the established Presbyterian churches,—and those churches

in particular, where the doctrines of Calvinism were most rigidly adhered to.

After these and a variety of other points are stated, the following sentences appear in the conclusion of Dr Erskine's Preface:

“ Of the sincere piety of some of the
“ teachers, (of Mr Wesley's methodism,) nay
“ even of their sound principles, the pub-
“ lisher would think favourably. But when
“ he reflects, that one is at the head of their
“ societies, who has blended with some pre-
“ cious gospel-truths, a medley of Armini-
“ an, Antinomian, and enthusiastic errors,
“ he thinks it high time to sound an alarum
“ to all who would wish to transmit to pos-
“ terity the pure faith once delivered to the
“ saints.—If men were brought to believe,
“ that right opinion is a slender part of re-
“ ligion, or no part of it at all, (*assertions*
“ *quoted before from Mr Wesley,*) there is
“ scarcely any thing so foolish or so wick-
“ ed, which Satan may not prompt them
“ to, by transforming himself into an angel
“ of light.”

It is easy to perceive, that when this pre-

face was written, Dr Erskine had a strong opinion on the subject, and that he was equally convinced of the pernicious tendency of the doctrines on which he animadverted, and of what he considered as disingenuity in the proceedings resorted to, to palliate them in Scotland.

It could scarcely be imagined that his preface would be allowed to pass without observation. It bears the date of January the 7th, 1765, and on the 14th of April following, John Wesley wrote the author what is certainly a smooth and evasive letter, but cannot be considered as containing any substantial reply.

He affects to doubt, if the Letters (or *Aspasio Vindicated*) ascribed to Mr Hervey are genuine, and yet scarcely ventures to pronounce against their authenticity.* Claiming to himself the honour of having been the instrument of converting Mr Her-

* The edition of these letters, published in London, was printed from the Reverend author's own manuscript, furnished by Mr John Hervey, the author's brother; a fact which puts the authenticity of the performance beyond all doubt.—

Note prefixed to Dr Erskine's Defence of his Preface.

vey, he allows himself to speak of him in a tone of the most sarcastical malignity. "Mr Hervey," he says, "fell on one to whom he had the deepest obligations—*O tell it not in Gath ! The good Mr Hervey (if these Letters were his) died cursing his spiritual Father !*"

If Mr Wesley ever had a spiritual Father, he would have blushed for his Son, could he have read this sentence. *

The rest of this letter contains the most fulsome and exaggerated compliments to Dr Erskine, evidently intended for the people of Edinburgh, rather than for the person to whom they are addressed, and nothing besides, but an artful evasion of the points stated in the preface alluded to, and an affectation of declining all controversy with Dr Erskine.

* Mr Wesley (Sermons, Vol. II, p. 53.) supposes faith and love to have been *extinct* in Peter, when he so dissembled, that Paul "withstood him to the face." What became of faith and love in Mr Wesley, notwithstanding the sinless perfection which he supposed himself to have attained, when he dipt his pen in gall and bitterness, to write in this manner of James Hervey ?

The management in Scotland by which Mr Wesley led the public to believe, that he intended to conceal there the opinions which he avowed in England, he ascribes to his solicitude to avoid controversial questions, or subjects “ which might engender “ strife.” And the language in which he describes the doctrines which he did preach in Scotland, is artfully contrived so as not to contradict, if it was not intended to involve, the opposite opinions, which he supposed to be held by Dr Erskine. On his assertion to which Dr Erskine had alluded, “ That right opinions are but a slender part “ of religion, and sometimes no part of it at “ all,” he says nothing more, than “ that “ this stale objection (as he calls it) he had “ answered over and over, and very lately, “ to Bishop Warburton.”

But the controversy did not end here. One of Mr Wesley’s coadjutors came forward with an “ earnest appeal” to the public on the subject, in which he intended to treat Dr Erskine’s preface with all possible severity, but in which he does not appear

to have succeeded in weakening the force of a single argument. Mr Wesley, it appears, had, in the mean time, been in Scotland, where he found some prejudices excited against him among his followers, in consequence of his having been charged with opinions so opposite to those which were held by Dr Erskine ; and this circumstance seems to have occasioned the “ Earnest Appeal.”

Dr Erskine, however, did not decline the controversy, even with the feeble author of this publication. In July 1765, there appeared a defence of his preface ; in which he discusses every part of the subject more completely than he had done before. And they who are well acquainted with the subject will, perhaps, allow, that, on the leading points at issue, he left no room for a sound reply, either from Mr Wesley or his defender.

This production, though hastily published, and not free of verbal inaccuracies, is, on the whole, well written ; and is equally successful in representing the doctrinal contradictions published by Mr Wesley at different

times, and the artful and contrary policy which he directed his followers to adopt in England and in Scotland. It gives, besides, a general view of the doctrinal mistakes which the author considered Mr Wesley as maintaining; and above all, represents the absurd and untenable dogma, which he asserted with so much pertinacity, that every sincere believer attains in the present world, (as he distinctly affirmed himself to have attained,) such a sinless perfection in his heart and life, as to be entirely free from sin, in thought, word, and deed.

Mr Wesley's frequent repetition of this doctrine, and the folly and presumption involved in it, are placed in the most striking light. There is, besides, a long note in the conclusion, to shew how frequently, and explicitly, Mr Wesley had asserted the interposition of miracles, by which, he alleged God had often attested, and continued to attest, his own mission. On this point, there is a long extract from his letter to the Bishop of Gloucester on the same subject; in which he had distinctly assert-

ed the existence of such miracles, and of two in particular, performed, the one on his own person, and the other in the case of *a John Haydon*.*

One would scarcely have imagined, that, in this age of the world, the wildest or most ignorant enthusiast would have deliberately sanctioned with his name such an extravagant assertion. Dr Warburton had thrown down the gauntlet to him on this subject; and, in his reply, Mr Wesley had explicitly stated, “that the deliverance of “John Haydon, and his own recovery, he “held to have been both supernatural;” and that the facts, in both instances, “were “supported by the same kind of proof, as “that of all other facts is wont to be, “namely, the testimony of competent witnesses;” adding, “that the testimony “here is in as high a degree as any reasonable man can desire.”

Dr Warburton’s Examination of Mr Wesley’s Journals, in his “Discourse on the

* See Note AA.

“Operations of the Holy Spirit,” and of the account given by Mr Wesley of miracles performed, either by him, or for him, though it is sometimes pushed farther than was either necessary or correct, is certainly written with great ability. As explanatory of the Christian doctrine concerning the operations of the Holy Spirit, it contains representations which intelligent divines will not readily admit. But, as an *argumentum ad hominem*, founded on the printed statements of Mr Wesley, it is quite irresistible.*

Dr Erskine went farther than Warburton, in representing the doctrinal mistakes which he imputed to Mr Wesley,—the contrary doctrines which he supposed him to bring forward in different situations,—and the artifice and management by which he considered him as endeavouring to divert the attention of the Calvinists of Scotland from his opinions in opposition to their tenets,

* See Warburton's Discourse on “the Operations of the Holy Spirit,” with the authorities there referred to, p. 609-624.—Quarto Edit. Vol. IV.

which, in other places, and in his printed books, he publicly avowed.

Mr Wesley had too much policy to enter the lists with Dr Erskine on these points, though he did not decline the same controversy in other situations. He was well aware, that, on the points at issue, a controversy agitated by himself, with such an opponent, might have served to undermine his influence among his own followers at Edinburgh. He chose, therefore, to send him the smooth and complimentary letter before referred to, placing his unwillingness to write against him on his respect for his personal character, rather than to run the hazard, among his Scotch disciples, of a doctrinal warfare with such an adversary.

This did not however prevent one of his disciples from taking up the controversy; for as long as Mr Wesley himself was understood to have declined it, his influence was supposed to be less in danger, among those whose good opinion he wished most to preserve.

The truth is, Mr Wesley's management

of his interest in Scotland has, at all times, been conducted with considerable address. During his own life, as well as since his death, the Methodist preachers sent to Edinburgh have been always men who either held the Calvinistic doctrines, or knew how to avoid the topics which could have brought their Calvinistical opinions into question.

But, though Wesley had preachers in many quarters of Scotland, and a fixed congregation in Edinburgh, which still subsists, his avowed adherents in this part of the island have never been numerous ; nor has his system made any considerable impression on the Scotch population. Much more has been done in England, where the Wesleyan Methodists form by far the greatest proportion of dissenters from the established church ; and have done more than all other sects together, to withdraw a great body of the people from their parochial instructors. In Scotland, they are but a handful of individuals in any district, compared either with the established

church, or with the Presbyterian dissenters. But in many of the parishes, and even in some of the counties of England, they have certainly attracted a considerable portion of the population.

It would not be difficult to point out the causes to which this difference is to be imputed.

But without entering on this point, it must be admitted by candid men, that with all the inconsistencies and defects, which adhere to the system of the Wesleyan Methodists, they have certainly had considerable success, especially in the southern part of the island, in rousing the attention of the multitude,—of the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the wavering,—to the great interests of practical religion. Mr Wesley, at different periods of his life, adopted a management, and propagated tenets, which wise and moderate men saw good reason to condemn and to resist. But that his assiduity and zeal had considerable effects, and that by his means, and by the labours of his followers, the at-

tention of great multitudes of men has been directed to personal religion, it is impossible to deny.

This may be admitted without departing from any objections, either to his creed, or to his management in conducting the sect of which he was the founder.

There is every reason to suppose, that Dr Erskine's opinions on the subject remained unchanged to the end of his life; and as he was not only a learned theologian and a zealous Calvinist, but a man of the most perfect sincerity, it is evident that nothing could have reconciled him, either to the Arminian tenets of Mr Wesley, or to some of the means by which his interest in Scotland was upheld.

There ought not to be the same reasons for the keen opposition given to the substance of Wesleyan Methodism, by those who profess to hold the same doctrinal opinions which he avowed. As a dissent from an established church, which, whatever Mr Wesley originally professed, it certainly is, it may, indeed, provoke their

hostility ; and provoke it the more, that it succeeds with so great a multitude of the people. But, at least, its resistance to Calvinism, (of late so obnoxious to so many English churchmen,) and the zeal of its founder for the opposite doctrine, should have served to lessen the asperity with which it is decried.

In 1767, Dr Erskine was translated from the New Grey Friars Church of Edinburgh, to the collegiate church of the Old Grey Friars in that city, where he became colleague to Dr Robertson, who had already been in that charge for several years.

Two such men officiating together in the same congregation for six and twenty years, can scarcely be mentioned in the history of any other Church.

Dr Erskine had, of course, less labour here, than in his former charge, in which he had no colleague ; and here he continued to officiate to the end of his life, with the most exemplary and conscientious punctuality.

In 1769, Dr Erskine had formed a

strong opinion on the great question in dispute between Great Britain and America, which began to be agitated before that time, though several years elapsed, before the hostilities between the two countries actually commenced.

It would be useless to enter here into the merits of a question which has been long since exhausted, and which terminated in a revolution which will never be forgotten in the annals of modern times. The progress of events gave, at different periods, a different aspect to the arguments employed on both sides, and produced many publications, of which the object was very remote from that which led Dr Erskine to take a part in the controversy.

It was not with him merely a question of politics, or of great national or commercial interest; though these views of it he was far from disregarding, and thought himself bound to advert to. His long habits of intimacy with individuals in America, and the interest with which he had almost, from his earliest youth, regarded their civil and

religious prosperity ; the sanguine hopes which he had indulged through life of the progress of religion and learning by their means ; and his constant habit of identifying their views and acquisitions with the best and most permanent interests of Great Britain ; presented the question to him as, independent of its political aspects, involving every consideration which could awaken either his personal or his religious solitudes.

Deeply affected by the controversy, and already anticipating hostilities, from which he apprehended the most serious effects to both countries, he published anonymously at London, in 1769, a discourse, to which he gave the title of a question, which, by its very terms, announced the leading considerations which pressed on his mind,—“ Shall I go to war with my American brethren ? ”

In this publication, his personal feelings and anxieties were most strikingly embodied with the argument which he maintained. The view which he presented of his

subject, would certainly have appeared both interesting and forcible, if his readers had been prepared to examine it coolly, or could have disengaged themselves from the party prejudices which, at that time, operated equally on both sides of the question.

His object was, to represent to the leaders, on the opposite shores of the Atlantic, the utter impolicy and mischievous effects of a war between the two countries, whatever its result might be ; and to state the principles which, in his apprehension, ought to have been decisive with both, to have settled the question at home, by fair and amicable concessions, in which the true interests of both might have been effectually consulted, without injury to either.

This, at least, he imagined to have been practicable at the time when he published this discourse ; and he argued, with both countries, separately, on principles which he thought it was the duty of each of them to have respected.

To the Americans, he represented, on the one hand, the improbability that such a war

would terminate in their favour, if, without foreign aid, they should attempt to maintain it from their own resources, against the united wealth and forces of Great Britain. And, on the other hand, he urged, with great earnestness, the inexpediency of their applying for aid, or of committing the defence of their religion and liberties, to arbitrary princes of Europe, who were not only the declared enemies of their mother country, but enemies, and often persecutors, of the Protestant faith. He reminded them, besides, of the security which they had enjoyed under the protection of Great Britain; of the comparatively inconsiderable expence to which their own defence could subject them, as long as they continued in connection with Great Britain; and of the danger to which they had always been exposed, from the very powers, whose assistance they might be tempted to solicit in the war which he had deprecated.

These several topics are stated in a few words. For the chief design of his publication was, not so much to address the Ameri-

cans, as to undeceive those of his countrymen at home, whom he believed to have the public good honestly at heart, and whose opinion or influence, he supposed, might have contributed to decide the important question then in agitation.

To them he presents, in a variety of lights, the consequences of such a war, not only from the mischievous tendency of war, in general, to afflict and desolate the world, but from the unnatural character of a war, against a people descended from their own ancestors ; from the doubtful issue which might attend it in the circumstances in which it must have been prosecuted ; and from the absolute uncertainty of its ultimate or remote effects in either country, whatever its termination might be.

He supposed the success of Great Britain to be the most probable result of the war ; but endeavours to shew, that nothing which she could gain could possibly compensate her, for the sacrifices and hazards to which she would of necessity be subjected by the struggle. And he concludes his

argument, by affirming, that the happiness, both of Great Britain and her colonies, depended, under God, on their union ; and that they could gain little, but had much which might be lost, by the contention.

There are other topics introduced. But this is the substance of the argument ; and it will not be denied, that, at the period when this publication appeared, an argument of this kind deserved the most serious attention.

The war with America was then at a greater distance than Dr Erskine supposed it. The repeal of the stamp act suspended actual hostilities for several years. But the visible irritation, after this time, on the minds, both of Britons and Americans, left dispassionate men no room to doubt, that the flame which the stamp act had kindled, was only smothered by its repeal, to burst out at last with greater violence.

It was the misfortune of both countries, that nothing conciliatory on either side was listened to, either at this period, or at any time during the course of the war. They

who attempted any conciliatory argument, were equally disregarded and decried by British and American politicians.

In Great Britain, in particular, it was scarcely possible to reason in the coolest and most dispassionate terms, against the hypothesis which was acted on, without incurring among the zealots who supported it, the perpetual imputation of democratical fanaticism,—a language which has since been often employed on very different subjects, with equal injustice, though with more effect.

The measures which were afterwards resorted to, to tax the American colonies, by means not less secure, but more indirect, were as unsuccessful as the stamp act which was repealed ; though it cannot be denied, that they had originally the support of a great proportion of the British population.

The war at last became inevitable, and open hostilities commenced in 1775. Dr Erskine's view of the controversy being still the same, in May 1776 he republished at

Edinburgh with his name, the tract which he had circulated anonymously from the London press in 1769; and accompanied it with a preface and appendix, which he thought of importance on the subject.

This republication did not proceed from any persuasion that the same argument was equally suited to the state of the controversy, after the commencement of hostilities, as at the time when he originally employed it in 1769. It was chiefly intended to shew what his apprehensions had been from the first, of the consequences of the measures which had been pursued in Great Britain; and what “the facts and reasonings were, “on which those apprehensions were founded.”

But the subject made so deep an impression on his mind, that he felt himself compelled, by a sense of duty, to exert himself farther, by forcible argument and earnest appeals to the good sense and virtue of his countrymen, in pleading for measures of conciliation, which he conceived might have been effectual still, to

have prevented the final separation of the American colonies from the mother country.

With this patriotic view, he published anonymously, in the same year, (in October 1776,) a dissertation entitled “Reflections on the Rise, Progress, and probable Consequences, of the present Contentions with the Colonies, by a Freeholder.”

This publication he introduced by an advertisement, which contained the following paragraphs. “Several late pamphlets, composed with much art and ability, and recommended by many of the beauties of language, have painted, in black and hateful colours, the claims and conduct of the North Americans ; and thereby have not a little inflamed the resentment of the mother country.* The author of this small tract, though deeply sensible of the inferiority of his talents, yet confiding in the goodness of

* He referred to Dr Johnson’s “Taxation no Tyranny,” “An Address of the People of Great Britain to the Inhabitants of America;” and “The Rights of Great Britain asserted against the Claims of America.”

“ his cause, humbly attempts to soften that
“ resentment. He represents, from the writ-
“ ings of the colonists, and of gentlemen
“ who had the best access to know their
“ sentiments, what concessions might have
“ been procured from them by gentle mea-
“ sures, and what they complained of in
“ those acts of Parliament which imme-
“ diately occasioned their taking up arms.
“ He wishes to convince his fellow freehold-
“ ers, especially such of them as have
“ seats in Parliament, that if the success of
“ the British arms shall put it in our power to
“ prescribe to our colonies conditions of
“ peace, it will be our duty, our honour,
“ and our interest, by a generous use of vic-
“ tory, to regain the lost affection of our old
“ friends, and to extinguish in them every
“ desire of becoming independent on Great
“ Britain.”

This is certainly one of the ablest and most argumentative of all the author's political tracts ; and, both in point of reasoning and authorities, was well entitled to rank high among the publications of the

time. When the period arrives for giving a genuine history of the American controversy, there are statements and references contained in this tract which ought not to be neglected.

That it had no considerable effect either in Great Britain or America, can excite no great degree of surprise among those who can recollect the spirit of the times. The zealots on both sides were too deeply, and too keenly engaged, to listen to any dispassionate remonstrance. With them almost all that was written on the subject was equally unsuccessful ; unless where, either the prejudices or the party views, on the one side or the other of the question, were flattered or defended.

The argument of this publication cannot be easily abridged. But the last paragraph contained in it, ought to be transcribed, because it relates to a subject which should be of perpetual interest in Great Britain, and is a permanent memorial of the political faith of its venerable author.

After alluding to those who might dislike the American colonists, for their attachment to the principles of the British Revolution in 1688, and to the subsequent accession of the House of Hanover to the British Throne, he goes on to say, that, “ For that class of men (who could on “ these accounts dislike them) the foregoing “ sheets were not intended. An honest Tory “ (he adds) and an honest Jacobite I respect. Though I despise and detest the “ principles of passive obedience, non-resistance, and indefeasible hereditary right, “ I venerate and love the men, who, from “ a conscientious regard to these principles, “ have risked or forfeited their fortunes or “ lives. But I cannot respect, I must detest “ treachery and deceit. I cannot respect “ the men who call themselves *the King’s* “ *friends*, nay, claim a monopoly of that “ title, or, at least, would exclude from it “ every Whig who understands his principles, and who thinks and acts consistently with them, while they rejoice in the “ prospect, that the contentions of our

“ Sovereign’s true friends may overturn his
“ throne, and British liberty. I would not
“ involve in the charge of such black dis-
“ simulation, any whose words or actions
“ have not given evidence of it. I acknow-
“ ledge, that men who condemn the revolu-
“ tion (of 1688) may be conscientious sub-
“ jects to his Majesty ; and I well know
“ some of them who would deem rebellion
“ against him criminal. Yet surely, some
“ jealousy, that there may be a snake
“ in the grass, is almost unavoidable,
“ when individuals and communities, who,
“ till lately, laboured under the strongest
“ suspicion of disaffection to government,
“ commence, all of a sudden, the zealous
“ advocates for the measures of adminis-
“ tration. *Timeo danaos, et dona fe-*
“ *rentes.*”

The political principles which Dr Erskine avowed, were at least the public and popular doctrines in Great Britain, for the greatest part of the last century, and were transmitted to our ancestors from a much earlier period. They were then thought essential

to the security both of the throne and of the altar. If later revolutions have spread new opinions, and a system of *legitimacy*, unknown to our fathers, begins to be pleaded in opposition to the spirit and principles of our happy constitution, the British people have not yet deserted the doctrines, for which their fathers hazarded their lives, nor will the Sovereign of the British people ever desert the principles, which placed his family on the throne.

The tract which has just been adverted to, was chiefly addressed to those who reasoned on the principles of constitutional law, or on the political views which prevailed either in Britain or America.

But there was another class of men on whom political considerations made less impression, but who were equally clamorous on the subject, and whose influence on public opinion was not to be despised. It consisted of those, who, without the attention due to general principles, considered the resistance of America as such a flagrant violation of the moral and religious duties

of good subjects, that nothing in their estimation but their unconditional submission to the mother country could be listened to, in deciding the question at issue.

For the sake of men who judged and acted on these views, and were to be found in very different ranks of society in Great Britain, Dr Erskine published, in the course of the same year, (1776,) another small tract entitled “The Equity and Wisdom of Administration, in the measures that have unhappily occasioned the American Revolt, tried by the Sacred Oracles.”

The argument of this tract is very different from the considerations which he had urged in his former publications, but is stated with equal ability and discernment.

At this period of the controversy, however, it was quite in vain to hope for success from any species of argument, which was not employed in defence of the principles, for which the war was undertaken. The great body of the people of Great Britain were then undoubtedly united, in supporting the measures of administration, and were

scarcely more averse to the original claims of America, than to every argument of conciliation, which was urged on the subject.

The final decision of the question has enabled us to estimate coolly, the arguments which were either listened to or disregarded. It has demonstrated to the conviction of all impartial men, not only that much more attention was due to conciliatory statements, than it was possible at that time to obtain for them ; but that the immediate and the remote consequences of the American war have gone equally beyond the anticipations of those who defended, and of those who condemned it, as well as of those who laboured to mediate between them, or to moderate their hostility.

The independence of America has neither injured the commerce, nor (unless by the addition which the war made to the national debt) the resources of Great Britain ; as all parties at that time imagined it must have done. The trade of the empire, and the sources of national wealth, became indisputably greater after the war, than they

had ever been before its commencement ; and every part of the direct loss, occasioned by our separation from North America, was soon much more than compensated, by other sources of prosperity.

It is equally indisputable, that, in another view, the American war has had indirect consequences of the most pestiferous kind. The French revolution was the spawn of the American ; and its effect to produce a still more extensive and more permanent mischief, by spreading at last, under specious forms, on the one hand, the democratical delusions which aim at the subversion of every regular government existing ; and, on the other, the doctrines of despotism among enlightened nations, as instruments of preserving the governments which it has not ultimately subverted,—are subjects of far more general interest to the world, than either the real, or the predicted, consequences of our separation from America have ever been to ourselves.

In the tracts which have been mentioned on the American question, there is one

point which occurs in them all, which has not yet been adverted to.

If there was a subject in the state of the world, which affected Dr Erskine's mind more deeply than another, it arose from his apprehension of the progress of Popery in Protestant states, and of the perpetual industry of Catholic priests in promoting it. Every circumstance which appeared to him directly or remotely favourable to the growth of Popery, awakened his alarms.

He thought he saw a progress given to it, in the constitution conceded by the British Parliament to the province of Canada, especially when connected with the vicinity of Canada to the other North American colonies,—in the direct communication with France to which the war introduced the Americans,—in the intimate association of French with American warriors,—and in the variety of insulated facts, relating to the same subject, which are brought forward in his tracts on the American controversy.

His strong impressions on this subject, though they appear in his treatment of the

American question, were by no means occasioned by it. They were deeply rivetted on his mind, during the whole course of his life. His serious apprehensions of the progress of Popery were much more frequently excited, by what he thought he observed at home, than by all the information which reached him from other countries. They had an influence on his conduct, in every thing which was either directly or remotely connected with the subject; and though he was feelingly alive to all the intelligence relating to it, which he could collect from his foreign correspondents, his attention was much more steadily directed to events, which he connected with its progress in his own country.

It may well be conceived, that, in this state of mind, he was prepared to resist, with his utmost zeal and activity, every attempt to relax the disabilities which had been laid on Roman Catholics, for the security of the Protestant establishment in Great Britain; or to weaken, by the authority of Parliament, the barriers which the

wisdom or jealousy of our ancestors had reared, against the encroachments of that pernicious superstition.

The subject came into public discussion in 1778. In that year, an act of Parliament passed for relieving Roman Catholics in England from certain disabilities and penalties imposed on them by an act of the 11th and 12th of King William; and there was, at the same time, an intention intimated of extending the same relief to the Catholics of Scotland.

This design excited a considerable alarm in Scotland; and a motion was made in the General Assembly of that year, by Dr Gillies of Glasgow, to take measures for resisting it. The motion was then negatived by a great majority. But the alarm in the country soon after rose to so great a height, and produced such a succession of keen and argumentative publications, on both sides of the question, that all orders of men appear to have taken a deep interest in the subject.

Dr Erskine, whose apprehensions of the

growth of Popery never subsided, published, soon after the meeting of the Assembly, (1778,) a pamphlet, entitled, “Considerations on the Spirit of Popery and the intended Bill for the Relief of Papists in Scotland;” in which the inexpediency of the proposed repeal is stated with great earnestness, but with equal fairness and ability. He represented the management of the Catholics abroad, by a variety of examples, which his acquaintance with foreign literature enabled him to specify; and he endeavoured to place, in a striking light, the effects of Catholic power and influence in foreign states, from authentic documents, not very accessible to common readers; to shew what the consequences might be in Scotland, if the statutory restraints against the Catholics there were removed, to the extent proposed by the repeal of the act of King William. He vindicated the church courts, and other public bodies of men, who had appeared in opposition to the repeal; and placed in a variety of lights, the permanent mischiefs which he anticipated from

that measure, if it should be carried into effect.

On the other hand, he stated the argument for the repeal taken from the severe and sanguinary character of the statutes proposed to be repealed; and candidly admitted, that our religion and liberties would perhaps be better guarded by gentler penalties steadily inflicted, than by laws which the genius and spirit of the times had rendered as dormant as if they had been obsolete. But he endeavoured to vindicate the necessity of penal laws in general against Popery, not merely because it is a corrupt and erroneous system of religion, but because he considered it as a perpetual and wicked conspiracy against all who oppose its enormous superstitions and usurpations; an implacable enemy to the general liberties of mankind, as well as to the free and happy constitution of Great Britain.

This argument he pursued with his usual perspicuity and judgment; and certainly brought to it more information with regard to the real situation of Catholics and Pro-

testants on the Continent, than will be found in any of the other publications of the time.

It was much easier to begin this controversy than to bring it to an end. It was carried on, at the same time, with great keenness, by a Non-juror bishop opposed to a Catholic bishop in Edinburgh; with manifest imprudence, and not the greatest fairness, on the part of the latter; and, by the former, if not with absolute accuracy in all the facts which he referred to, with a very considerable degree both of acuteness and learning.

A great body of the clergy—synods and presbyteries—published declarations on the subject, more and less moderate, but of whom the greater part at that time considered the projected repeal as highly inexpedient and unwise. A great outcry was in consequence raised against the clergy, by those who favoured the repeal, for the countenance given by them to these public declarations; though it is unquestionably true, that the clergy were more generally

urged on by the people, than the people were influenced by them.

At this period the late worthy and respectable Dr Macfarlan, one of the ministers of Canongate, published “ A Defence “ of the Clergy who had appeared in Opposition to the intended Repeal,” in which there is a display of good sense, moderation, and well conducted argument, worthy of the high character of its estimable author. *

There appeared at the same time, on the other side of the question, “ An Address to “ the People of Scotland, on the alarms “ which had been raised in regard to Popery,” by the venerable Dr Campbell, Principal of the Marischal College of Aberdeen ; written with great temper, and with great force of argument, scriptural, historical, and political.

The question came afterwards into so-

• Dr Macfarlan died a few years after this time, deeply regretted by the whole community of Edinburgh, who lost in him one of its most useful and valuable members. He will always be remembered by his personal friends, and by every individual who had access to know his worth, with the most perfect respect and affection.

lenn discussion, in the General Assembly of 1779. There had been overtures relating to it transmitted, from almost every quarter of the kingdom. Though the decision of the Assembly, considering the spirit of the times, was in general expressed in moderate and guarded terms, it contained a decided opinion against the expediency of the projected repeal, and mentioned the particular satisfaction which the Assembly had received, from the assurances which had been given by authority, that the design, which had excited so much alarm, was then laid aside.

Dr Erskine afterwards published an account of the debate in the Assembly, which certainly exhibits a striking specimen of the talents of the Scottish church ; though, at this distance of time, when the question can be coolly examined, the argument might, in many points, appear to have been carried farther, than dispassionate men would now be willing to carry it.

Prefixed to his account of the debate, which appears to have been very faithfully

reported, he published an address to Dr Campbell of Aberdeen, in which, with much personal respect for him, he mentioned the points, in which he found himself compelled to differ from the statements given, in “the Address to the People of Scotland;” and the principles, on which his own opinion on the question remained unchanged.

The agitation which the controversy had occasioned, had before this time produced very serious effects. The riots at Edinburgh in the spring of 1779, which had been preceded by a tumult of less consequence at Glasgow, will always be remembered to the disgrace of the country—Though the impression made by both on the public mind, was soon after completely overwhelmed, by the still more disgraceful and flagitious scenes exhibited from similar causes, by the mob of London in 1780; a period of national gloom and degradation, which can never be blotted from the British history, or be mentioned but with detestation and horror.

The Catholic question was, in London, made the signal of all the atrocities, which a lawless and ungovernable mob could perpetrate, of whom but a small proportion could take any intelligible interest in the subject. And though the mischief done at Edinburgh was of an inferior character, and was probably urged on chiefly by individuals, whose imaginations were really inflamed by the apprehended encroachments or predominance of popery ; it has left a striking warning to other times, of the prudence and consideration requisite, in the agitation of questions, by which the passions of the people, rather than their understandings, may be roused into activity ; or in which, they who have the worst intentions, can find occasions to urge on the unthinking multitude, to anarchy or crimes.

The conduct of the General Assembly in 1779, and the assurances then given by administration, that the intention of repealing the penal statutes, which applied to Scotland, was abandoned, put an end, in Scotland, to all solicitude on the subject, at

that time ; as well as to all the turbulence of the multitude.

It deserves, however, to be remarked, that the argument, on both sides of the question, has never, perhaps, been better stated, than in the speeches which were published from the debate in that Assembly. The statement against the emancipation of the Catholics was never given with more perspicuity, or supported with stronger reasons, than in the speech of Mr Stevenson of St Madoes ; who is known at the same time to have exerted himself, in private, to moderate the zeal of those who held the same opinions with himself.* Nor would it be easy to find a clearer or more conclusive argument, against the apprehended hazard to result from the

* Mr Stevenson was undoubtedly one of the ablest men whom Scotland has ever produced, in ecclesiastical business ; in the knowledge of ecclesiastical law, and in the application of the forms of proceeding to particular cases. As a man, and as a minister, by the strength of his understanding and the kind affections of his heart, by the firmness of his attachments, by the cheerfulness of his private intercourse, and by the steady uniformity of his pastoral character, he was regarded by his personal friends with perpetual delight ; and with veneration, by every man of good understanding in the district where he

emancipation of the Catholics, than that which was so powerfully urged in the speech of Dr Robertson.

Many of the same arguments will be found in the speeches of other members, accompanied with a great variety of illustration. And there is scarcely any where, in the history of the Scottish church, the record of a better conducted debate, or a more striking specimen of sound information and ability, in the management of a public question.

While the subject of Catholic emancipation was still in agitation, Dr Erskine felt a strong desire to state fairly the ideas which prevailed in Scotland, to Edmund Burke, by whom the bill for relief of the Catholics was introduced into Parliament.

With this view, he sent him by Lord Balgonie, (now the Earl of Leven,) a number of printed papers and sermons, containing

lived. He gave weight and dignity to the profession which he adorned.

"Si tu oblitus es, at Dii meminereunt, meminit fides."

CATULLUS.

the substance of the arguments, which had been urged in Scotland, against the repeal of the penal statutes. It does not appear, at what precise time this was done, farther, than that it must have been in the course of the spring, or early in the summer, of 1779. It was, most probably, about the month of May in that year, before it was known, that Mr Burke's bill was to be abandoned. None of the tracts or sermons, which were sent Mr Burke, are specified in his reply, excepting Dr Macfarlan's "Defence of the Clergy of Scotland;" and one of Dr Erskine's own publications; most probably, from the description given of it, that which related to "The Rise, Progress, and Consequences" of the American war.

Mr Burke's answer is dated on the 12th of June, after it had been settled, that his bill was not to be prosecuted; and it ought to be inserted here, as one striking memorial, among many others, of an individual, whom, whatever opinion may be held of his public conduct, at different periods of his life, all parties must admit, to have

been one of the greatest men of his age and time.

The letter is long. But an attempt to abridge it would not be forgiven.

“SIR,—I am honoured with your very
“obliging letter by Lord Balgonie, together
“with the four pieces, which you have been
“so good as to send along with it. No-
“thing but the uncommon urgency of pub-
“lic business could have prevented me from
“immediately waiting on Lord Balgonie,
“to pay my respects to his Lordship, and
“to make my acknowledgments for his
“politeness on the occasion. I am besides
“to thank you, Sir, for giving me an oppor-
“tunity of being known to a person whose
“character must naturally make me ambi-
“tious of his acquaintance.

“The sentiments expressed in your
“pamphlet, so far as they regard Ameri-
“ca, are very honourable to you. They
“discover a great deal of that enlarged be-
“nevolence of heart, which is very rarely se-
“parated from sound political judgment;
“and is certainly the best substitute that

“ can be conceived, where that judgment
“ is wanting. In other particulars, that re-
“ late to the internal regulation of the king-
“ dom, you will have the goodness to ex-
“ cuse me, if I have the misfortune of dif-
“ fering with you, in no small degree. I
“ do not presume to censure you, who have
“ so much better reason undoubtedly, for
“ the opinions you entertain, than I am
“ able to give for mine. I speak only for
“ myself, and my own private feelings. I
“ assure you, that I should think myself ir-
“ rational and inconsistent, (to say no more,)
“ if I refused to apply my ideas of civil to
“ religious liberty. When I would so far
“ subdue the ambition natural to mankind,
“ in giving up, as I did with great cheerfulness,
“ very flattering power, and very colour-
“ able rights, of the nation of which I am
“ a citizen, and the legislature of which I
“ am a member, in favour of the happiness
“ of a very distant part of mankind, I should
“ find it difficult to trace the order and
“ connection of my principles, if I were ca-
“ pable of denying indulgences infinitely

“ smaller, to my immediate countrymen;
“ when, too, these indulgences were to be
“ allowed, without abandoning any one
“ object of honour, profit, or pleasure.

“ I wish, along with you, that we may not
“ be so far Englishmen or Scotsmen, as to
“ forget that we are men. I wish that we
“ may not be so far Presbyterians or Epis-
“ copals, as to forget that we are Christians;
“ the one being our common bond of hu-
“ manity, as the other is our common bond
“ of religion.

“ I am by choice, and by taste, as well
“ as by education, a very attached mem-
“ ber of the established church of England.
“ But it is as far from my wish, as, I thank
“ God, it is from my power, to persecute
“ you, who probably differ from me, in a
“ great many points.

“ I wish it were equally out of my power,
“ to persecute any Roman Catholic. He has
“ as much a right to my benevolence, as
“ even you, Sir; and no man can have a
“ better claim to universal esteem and re-
“ gard. I hope, too, that you will not

“ think it any sort of derogation from the
“ deference which I ought to pay to your
“ judgment, that I think myself obliged in
“ conscience, to take my opinions of men’s
“ principles, rather from themselves than
“ from you. I keep, at the same time, I
“ assure you, very just weights and mea-
“ sures ; and as I do not take my ideas of
“ the churches of France and of Italy, from
“ the pulpits of Edinburgh, so I shall most
“ certainly not apply to the Consistory at
“ Rome, or to the Sorbonne at Paris, for
“ the doctrines and genius of the church of
“ Scotland.

“ I have lived long enough, and largely
“ enough in the world, to know for certain,
“ that the religion, which (I believe most
“ firmly) the Divine Wisdom has introduced
“ into it, for its improvement, and not for
“ its depravation, contains, in all its parts,
“ so much of good, as not wholly to disap-
“ point the wise purposes, for which that re-
“ ligion was intended, and abundantly to
“ merit all the esteem and veneration I can
“ bestow upon it. Perhaps I sometimes

“ think I see many strong marks of human
“ error and infirmity, in all its divisions;
“ though I can much more easily support
“ the modesty, which induces me to treat
“ them all with respect, than the presump-
“ tion which leads me to find fault with
“ any of them.

“ It is in this manner I think of the whole
“ Christian church ; I mean the great bodies
“ of the East and the West, including all
“ their particular descriptions ; which I am
“ willing to consider, rather as divisions
“ made for convenience and order, than
“ separations, from a diversity of nature, or
“ from irreconcilable contradiction in prin-
“ ciple. I think so of the whole, and all
“ the considerable parts, of those who pro-
“ fess our common hope ; having, at the
“ same time, that degree of respect for all
“ other religions—even for those who have
“ nothing better than mere human reason,
“ or the unregulated instincts of human na-
“ ture, for their basis—that I could not pre-
“ vail on myself to bestow on the syna-
“ gogue, the mosque, or the pagoda, the

“ language which your pulpits lavish on a
“ great part of the Christian world.

“ If, on account of such sentiments, peo-
“ ple call me a Roman Catholic, it will *Burke*
“ give me not the smallest degree of dis-
“ turbance. They do me too much ho-
“ nour, who aggregate me as a member to
“ any one of those respectable societies,
“ which compose the body of Christianity.
“ Wherever they choose to place me, I am
“ sure to be found in extraordinary good
“ company. I do not aspire to the glory
“ of being a distinguished zealot for any na-
“ tional church, until I can be much more
“ certain than I am, that I can do it honour
“ by my doctrine or my life ; or serve it in
“ some more reputable and effectual man-
“ ner, than by a passionate proceeding
“ against those who are of another descrip-
“ tion.

“ I have read the pamphlets and ser-
“ mons, which you were so obliging as to
“ send me. They are, in many respects,
“ written with the ability and skill, that
“ may be expected from men of learned

“ education, and who are in the exercise of
“ an authority over the minds of others.
“ But I confess I am somewhat surprised,
“ that you should think they serve as proofs
“ of the *moderation*, of the writers and preach-
“ ers of them.

“ If I had the ability, which I have not,
“ or the wish, which I hope I never shall
“ have, for exciting popular tumults for the
“ destruction of any set of people, I could
“ not desire any thing more elaborately
“ composed, or more powerfully drawn
“ from all the sources of eloquence, for that
“ purpose, than some of the pieces you have
“ sent me. It is not a cold caution for mo-
“ derating our anger, or a refinement on
“ the difference between a detestation of a
“ man’s principles, and a hatred of his per-
“ son, that can save the objects of these
“ sanguinary invectives, from the blind fury
“ of the multitude. To represent a man as
“ immoral by his religion, perfidious by his
“ principles, a murderer on a point of con-
“ science, an enemy, even from piety, to the
“ foundations of all social intercourse, and

“ then tell us, that we are to offer no
“ violence to such a person ; under favour,
“ appears to me rather an additional insult
“ and mockery, than any sort of corrective
“ of the injury we do our neighbour, by the
“ character we give him.

“ He might, indeed, be unacquainted
“ with human nature, who will from them
“ infer, that the authors of those pieces in-
“ tend all the mischief which they produce.
“ I know the contrary. They have but
“ one object in their view. It is dear
“ to them. They raise imaginary fears
“ about it. They have the common appre-
“ hensions of jealous men. They imagine
“ a combination of all the world to rob
“ them of their beloved possession. They
“ of course suppose all sorts, even of pre-
“ ventive hostility, to be self-defence ; and
“ this just and laudable principle of self-
“ preservation, if not guided with great
“ judgment, is liable to be the most mis-
“ chievous thing in the world. For the
“ rights of self-preservation being the same
“ thing as necessity, are circumscribed by

“ no law ; and, therefore, it is proper, that
“ the existence of the case should be very
“ clearly and solidly proved, before men
“ can have any permission to act upon it.
“ We soon forget what another may suffer,
“ when the question is about our own safe-
“ ty. We ought, therefore, not to be hasty
“ in taking men to be enemies ; because,
“ against enemies, it is easy to believe any
“ ill, and the rules of hostility admit of al-
“ most every sort of violence. I really be-
“ lieve those gentlemen are in earnest when
“ they talk of self-preservation ; but fear,
“ which is always cruel, is not always found-
“ ed.

“ It would, I likewise admit, be alto-
“ gether unfair, to attribute to those particu-
“ lar sermons, the robberies and burnings,
“ and other outrages, committed at Edin-
“ burgh and Glasgow ; because all these
“ enormities were perpetrated before the
“ sermons were preached, and there were
“ afterwards few or no houses of any mark,
“ or any quantity of valuable goods left,

“ upon which the populace could exert
“ their zeal.

“ But I cannot be equally sure, that some
“ *similar* writings or discourses have not
“ been the very natural causes of these dis-
“ orders : Nor can I by any means agree
“ with Dr Macfarlan, that men, when they
“ wish to free themselves from the terror
“ of penal laws, and the odium of being
“ supposed the just object of them, when
“ they earnestly solicit to have that stigma
“ taken off, and to recommend themselves
“ to their government by dutiful applica-
“ tions, can be said to bring their misfor-
“ tunes on themselves, if, on that account,
“ a furious and bigotted set of miscreants
“ choose to rob them of their goods, and to
“ burn their houses. I really should be
“ shocked at that gentleman’s assertion, if
“ I considered it as a deliberate proposition,
“ or any more than the effect of that sud-
“ den warmth, which sometimes surprises
“ the reason of the most prudent and equit-
“ able men.

“ I greatly fear, that I have trespassed

“ on your time and patience very unwarrantably, especially as all discourse on the present subject is just now superfluous. The matter of the contest is over for this year ; perhaps for ever.

“ You have in Scotland obtained a great victory, over those who differed from you in opinion. In England, however, we have been still better off, for we have obtained two victories, though, indeed, of a nature very different from your’s,—victories, not over our enemies, but over our own passions and prejudices; having passed, in the last Session, a bill for the relief of Roman Catholics ; and in the present for the relief of Protestant Dissenting ministers, many of whom are of your particular discipline and persuasion. On this latter, Sir, you will permit me to give you my hearty congratulations.

“ It is unlucky that matters of difference should make the discourse much longer, than the pleasant topics on which we are agreed. I mean pleasant as to the principle; for nothing is so perfectly disagreeable

“ as the present aspect of things, with regard
“ to the public, in which (however odious it
“ may sound) I include our brethren in
“ America, whether they find it their in-
“ terest to embody under our monarchy, or
“ to regulate themselves in republics of their
“ own. In either case, I do not like to
“ part with my interest in, and my com-
“ munion with, them. They are still Eng-
“ lishmen by blood, and freedmen by prin-
“ ciple. I cannot help thinking, that we
“ should have far more glory, and far more
“ advantage too, (but even public glory is
“ public advantage,) in letting them govern
“ themselves under the protection of Eng-
“ land as friends, than to attempt a con-
“ quest over them as enemies, while they
“ have France for their protector. I say
“ this, even in case of possible success,
“ which, in my opinion, knowing, as I do, the
“ consequences, would be worse than any
“ defeat which could befall us.

“ I think we might have kept them very
“ easily. But when the natural bonds of
“ dominion are so broken, it is better, I

“ am sure, to look for a friendship that will
“ hold, than an authority that will not.
“ But at present America is in a state of
“ dreadful confusion, of which we cannot
“ in the least profit. And, I am sorry to
“ tell you, that, by the complexion of the
“ House of Commons last night, I see no
“ prospect, that all the humiliations which
“ have impaired our strength will increase
“ our wisdom.

“ Permit me to apologise once more, for
“ this first and last trouble I give you, and
“ be assured, that I have the honour to be,
“ with the greatest esteem and respect, Sir,
“ your most obedient and humble servant,

“ EDM. BURKE.

“ *12th June 1779, Charles Street,
“ St James's Square.*”

The emancipation of the Catholics is still a question in dependence; on which the opinions of the most eminent statesmen, and most enlightened divines, are not even yet united. The argument against it was certainly entitled to a fair and candid exami-

nation ; and, perhaps, at the date of Mr Burke's letter, required more consideration than he was willing to bestow on it. His remark on Dr Macfarlan's pamphlet, in particular, was too hastily adopted, and is not justified by any thing, which will be found in that respectable author's publication.

It must be observed, besides, that many individuals, both among statesmen and divines, who, in 1779, if they had then come forward, would have probably favoured the emancipation, have, in later times, seen the subject in a different light ; and now think it their duty to resist every attempt to release the Catholics from disabilities, which appear to them to be necessary still, for the protection both of our Protestant and our civil establishment.

The outrages committed in Scotland in 1778 and 1779, as well as the more horrible events which disgraced the city of London in 1780, were, beyond all doubt, the work of incendiaries, who eagerly seized on the public agitation of this question, to inflame the minds of the populace ; and to

stimulate them to crimes, which, at least in Scotland, they, who were originally engaged in the controversy, would have hazarded their lives to have prevented.

Too much was certainly written on the subject ; but it is undoubtedly true, at the same time, that the folly and imprudence of some of the Catholic defenders of emancipation in Scotland, did more, in that country, to agitate the people, than all that was written against it.

It is equally clear, on the other side, that the argument in favour of Catholic emancipation was then, as it has been ever since, sustained by some of the most enlightened statesmen and divines, which this country has ever produced. Among the former, Mr Burke was certainly one of the most eminent.

The argument of his letter to Dr Erskine, though, in some points, it partakes of the splendid exaggerations, into which a man of genius is often betrayed, is clear and forcible, as it applies to his conclusions. He mixes, with all the respect due to his cor-

respondent, the firm assertion of opinions, which were deeply rivetted on his own mind, and which have since made a progress, even in Scotland, which Mr Burke himself had not anticipated.

Since that time the disabilities which affected the Catholics, with regard to their property, have been, in a great measure, removed, without having created any opposition, or excited any discontent or alarm ; and even the right of presenting to a church benefice in Scotland, has not been withheld from a Catholic patron.

The general question of Catholic emancipation has been lately agitated, without exciting much of the attention of the people, and even without creating any general interest or solicitude.

The Catholics of Edinburgh and Glasgow have now more splendid places of worship, than they ever had before, since the time of the Reformation ; and publicly assemble, with as little disturbance from the populace, as any of the other dissenters from the established church.

Dr Erskine's opinions on the general subject, undoubtedly remained unchanged to the end of his life. But whatever may now be thought of the argument, either in favour of the Catholics or against them, and whatever shape the same argument may assume in the neighbouring kingdom of Ireland, there is no reason to suppose, that it will not always be conducted in this country, with the temper and moderation, worthy of good subjects ; as well as with the sound political discernment, which ought to distinguish enlightened men, even where some difference of opinion is not to be avoided.

On the subject of America, Mr Burke was thoroughly prepared to agree with his correspondent ; and his letter contains a striking specimen, added to many others, of the liberal and patriotic views, with which he contemplated the great revolution, which was then almost completed. He had undoubtedly done his utmost, to prevent the American war from terminating in the separation of America from Great Britain.

But this event, he had good reason, at the date of his letter, to anticipate as almost unavoidable.

It may certainly be fairly questioned, whether his political opinions on other subjects, had all "*the order and connection*," at the different periods of his life, which he says, in his letter to Dr Erskine, he thought himself bound to preserve, in his principles of *civil* and of *religious* liberty.

It was at least not *the same principle*, which dictated his opinions on the American revolution, on Parliamentary reform, on the reduction of the expences in the civil list, on the relief granted to Protestant dissenters, or even on Catholic emancipation; which afterwards produced his vehement and powerful philippics, against every change, innovation, or encroachment, on established usages.

Mr Burke certainly knew how to reconcile his different opinions. But at least the principle which governed them, was not the same.

He undoubtedly possessed a character of great distinction ; and whatever defects his opponents have imputed to his political conduct, he is entitled to hold a first place, in the annals of his country, as a public man : as a man who followed out his own ideas of integrity ; and as a man who possessed a splendid and powerful genius, which did honour to the age in which he lived.

On the subject of Catholic emancipation, in which the greatest statesmen of his time certainly coincided with him, his opinions will very probably become the ultimate opinions of his country ; though some part of his letter to Dr Erskine should be thought to contain more splendour than argument.

CHAP. VIII.

Dr Erskine acquires the Dutch and German Languages.—His Sketches of Ecclesiastical History.—His consolatory Letters on the Death of Children or Friends.—His Correspondence with Lord Hailes, and with Bishop Hurd.

A REMARKABLE fact is now to be mentioned, which must give a very striking view of the ardour, with which Dr Erskine prosecuted his literary studies, to the end of his life; and of the perseverance, with which he encountered difficulties, which most men, in the same circumstances, would have thought insurmountable.

He had, for many years, carried on a correspondence with learned men on the Continent,* from whom he received communications, both by letters and books, on which he set a high value. But his igno-

* With Professor Bonnet of Utrecht, and others equally eminent.

rance of the foreign languages was a source of perpetual regret and embarrassment. Excepting the French, he was completely unacquainted with all of them, till he had nearly reached his sixtieth year.

At that late period of his life, he had the courage to undertake the acquisition of the Dutch and German languages. Though these languages were frequently taught in Edinburgh, a few years later, there were at that time few, if any, teachers of either in Scotland. He had the resolution to apply to them, without any assistance whatever; and the following anecdote will shew, that, in doing so, he overrated neither his powers nor his industry.

It is an anecdote, which the writer of this narrative received many years ago, from the late Lord Elliock,—a man who will always be remembered by those who had the honour to know him, as one who united to the dignity of a Judge, the information of a man of letters, and the most respectable qualities of a gentleman.

He had been much on the Continent

in early life, and was well acquainted with modern languages. He had an excellent library. And having been one of Dr Erskine's original associates, he was applied to by him, for the use of a German Grammar and Dictionary, at the time when he first resolved to attempt the acquisition of the German language.

By his Lordship's account, these books were returned, when they had not been out of his possession more than six weeks. He therefore naturally concluded, that they had not been of much use; and that, finding the acquisition of languages at his age, with no other help than a Grammar and Dictionary, a more difficult undertaking than he had imagined it, his friend had relinquished the attempt.

But when Dr Erskine soon after visited him, he was surprised to find, that, so far from having given up his design, he imagined himself to have received so much advantage from the Grammar and Dictionary, as to be already able, without

assistance, to collect the substance of a German book.

It was a matter of curiosity to see, how far a man of Dr Erskine's age, with all his industry and acuteness, could have carried this advantage, within the short space of six weeks; and being in his library, Lord Elliock produced a German book, of which he requested him to give him the satisfaction of hearing him read a few sentences.

Dr Erskine had never heard another person read German, and had never pronounced a single sentence. He could not, therefore, literally comply with Lord Elliock's request. But, without attempting to pronounce any part of the original, he readily translated into English a great part of a page, in a book which he had never before seen; so as to convince his Lordship, that his Grammar and Dictionary had indeed been turned to good account.

With no other assistance, he was able, after six weeks' study, when he had nearly reached the age of sixty, to translate with ease the substance of a German book, to

the satisfaction of a man of letters, who was well acquainted with the language. It would be difficult to give a more striking example, either of perseverance or facility, in the acquisition of a foreign tongue.

He never pretended to be a complete German scholar ; or to have acquired more, than the power of comprehending readily, the substance of a Dutch or German book. But he could, without any preparation, translate pages together for the entertainment of his friends ; and the publication of his *Sketches and Hints on Church History*, in two octavo volumes, affords a lasting proof of the minuteness and accuracy of his foreign literature, notwithstanding all the disadvantages which attended his progress in it.

In the preface, indeed, to the first volume of this publication, he speaks with the utmost diffidence of his own acquisitions. “ Without slavishly following the words and expressions of the authors, (whose books he had abridged or translated,) I have endeavoured, he says, though I fear often

“ unsuccessfully, to exhibit justly their rea-
“ sonings, and even their irony, in such
“ plain and forcible language, that the reader
“ might enter into their ideas and feelings.
“ The meaning of my authors I have pro-
“ bably sometimes mistaken. I hope, how-
“ ever, these mistakes seldom or never af-
“ fect any important fact or argument. My
“ having learnt the Dutch and German at
“ an advanced period of life, and without
“ the assistance of a teacher, the candid
“ will sustain as a sufficient apology.”

The two volumes which he published, entitled, “ Sketches and Hints of Church
“ History and Theological Controversy,
“ chiefly translated or abridged from mo-
“ dern foreign writers,” afford a lasting spe-
cimen, of the industry with which he ap-
plied to this department of literature ; and
of his minute accuracy, in the information
which he collected from foreign books, on
the most important subjects.

The first volume was published in 1790,
and its general object is expressed in the
Preface, in the following words: “ The

“ chief design of the following sheets, is to
“ impart to others the entertainment and
“ instruction which I have received from
“ foreign writers, as to the history of the
“ earliest ages of Christianity, and the pre-
“ sent state of religion and theological con-
“ troversy. Imperfect as the information
“ is which they contain, I flatter myself it
“ is important. In some instances, my
“ work is a free translation ; in others, an
“ abridgment of select passages in the ori-
“ ginal writers. Their sentiments, when
“ different from my own, I have not dis-
“ guised. Their opinions of persons and
“ things, which I have not approved, I have
“ not concealed.”

The volume consists of thirteen articles, of which eight are translations or abridgments of Dutch or German books ; one of a French, and another of a Latin publication ; and three are taken from writers in English, of Scotland, Ireland, and America.

It is in vain to attempt to give the substance of abridgments, or even to convey

a general idea of them. But the English reader will find in this small volume, an outline of many articles of the greatest interest and curiosity, on the character, the substance, the progress, the divisions, and the opponents, of the Christian church, to which he has few opportunities of access by other means, and which no other publication can give him within the same limits.

The second volume appeared in 1797, and contains sixteen articles, of which eleven are translations and abridgments from foreign writers. They relate more to modern transactions and events, than the articles contained in the first volume; and in particular, to the circumstances attending Popery and Protestantism in foreign states, and the mutual influence of Popery and infidelity on the condition of the world. There are a few articles besides, on subjects of literary or theological curiosity; of which there are two original essays; one of which relates to the scriptural account of the sun standing still in the days of Joshua, written by Dr Macqueen of Kilmuir, in Sky; and

the other is the production of the publisher himself.

This volume will also sufficiently reward the labour of those who shall peruse it; and will put them in possession of a considerable variety of information, not easily accessible from other sources. The travels of Nicolai, with which the volume is introduced, have indeed been censured abroad. His intentions have been thought unfriendly to Christianity; and some of his narratives have been contradicted. Dr Erskine has given in his Preface his reasons for thinking that the reflections on Nicolai have been exaggerated, and that his statement of facts is, in most instances, exact and accurate.

The idea of such a publication, as Dr Erskine's Sketches, was entirely his own; and, if it were prosecuted farther, and well executed, is certainly calculated to answer the purposes of general literature. It is but a small proportion, even of *the literati* of any country, who have such a command of modern languages, as to become acquainted

with the progress of human knowledge, in the different nations of Europe, by means of original publications. In Great Britain, from our frequent intercourse with France, every well educated man has long had access to French literature, and a few to Spanish and Italian books.

But, till of late years, the Dutch and German, and the greatest part of the other modern languages, unless to a small number of those who had the advantage of foreign travel, were so completely unknown, that even the merchants were obliged to have recourse to foreigners, to manage their correspondence.

The literature of Europe, and all the correspondence of learned men, had been conducted for ages, by means of the Latin language, which was the common and universal instrument of general knowledge.

After the revival of letters in the sixteenth century, almost every book of science, theology, or history, and all the literary controversies of that eventful period, were given to the world in Latin. The pre-

lections of every university were in the same language; and almost all the intercourse of learned men depended on it.

The cultivation of modern languages was of consequence, in a great degree, neglected; and at least their improvement was far from bearing an equal proportion, to the progress of science and literature in Europe.

During the course of the two last centuries, the vernacular languages have been much more generally cultivated, and the Latin tongue has no longer the same place, either in academical prelections, or in the writings of learned men.

This change in the progress of letters, though it has given modern languages advantages, which they could never have otherwise possessed, has at least greatly abridged the facilities of literary intercourse, and, what is of more importance, by substituting a modern for an ancient language, in the writings of learned men, has lowered the scale of our classical acquisitions, as much as it has apparently lessened their value.

As long as men of science, in a great measure, confined themselves to a common language, the books of every country in Europe were equally accessible. But when they began to write in their vernacular tongues, their communication became not only more limited and difficult, but of necessity was made to depend on the acquisitions of a few, to whom the modern languages were familiar: on the industry of translators; or on such detached views of foreign literature, as were furnished by the literary journals which profess to review foreign publications, or as the writers of different countries incorporated with their own productions.

Every one must perceive, how much of the literature of other countries must, in these circumstances, be beyond the reach of the best informed men, to whom the foreign languages are not familiar; and how great an object it must ever be to them, to find an easier access to it. The dead languages are common to men of letters, in every country. But a familiar acquaint-

ance with the vernacular languages must of necessity, even among them, be extremely limited.

The idea adopted by Dr Erskine, was to publish, within a small compass, the substance and argument of foreign books, so as to render them familiar, not only to men of a liberal education, but to common readers. He neither intended to confine himself to literal translations, nor even to exact abridgments; but professing to give the substance of the facts or arguments, which he found in his originals, he never withheld the reasonings or opinions of the authors, even when he differed from them, and always stated fairly the opinions which they combated. On all material points, on which the objects or the conclusions of his authors depended, he translated as literally as possible, and, at the same time, endeavoured to compress the substance of a detailed argument or narrative, so as to give a distinct view of its general effect, within the limits of a few pages.

Though he did not confine himself to

books in the Dutch or German tongues, his Sketches contain, as has already been stated, a much greater number of articles in these, than in any other languages. Though he had foreign literature chiefly in his eye, and especially in those departments in which it was directly or remotely connected with his theological studies, his plan did not prevent him from inserting whatever else he found suited to his general design, from France, Geneva, Great Britain, or America.

Every article is not of equal importance. But the two volumes undoubtedly contain a series of information, on which a theological student will set a considerable value, if he has not access to the original authors.

It has already been mentioned, that the greatest part of the second volume relates to the progress and probable effects of Popery in the states of Europe; a subject which at all times pressed heavily on Dr Erskine's mind. The tenth article, written by himself, represents the mutual influence

of Popery and Infidelity on each other, and the dangers to which, in his apprehension, the religion of Protestants was, or might be exposed.

This was a subject, as has been hinted before, which at all times pressed heavily on his mind. And before this part of the narrative is concluded, there is a fact which ought to be adverted to, which gives a striking view of his habits of thinking, with regard to every thing connected with it.

In another part of this Memoir it has been stated, that he was accustomed to speak with great diffidence, of the interpretation of prophecies not yet fulfilled. But in this sketch on the influence or progress of Popery, he did not hesitate to insert the following paragraphs, in opposition to the opinions of those, who had considered the late revolutions in Europe, and the demolition of one throne after another, to make way for successive usurpations, as if they had been the predicted signs of the final destruction of Popery. “ Strange and paradoxical as the assertion may appear to

“ some, who fancy they read in every vic-
“ tory of the French, a presage of Anti-
“ christ’s speedy fall, more is to be appre-
“ hended to Protestantism from these vic-
“ tories, than from the fugitive royalists ;
“ though it is readily allowed, that nothing
“ is more remote from the view of the con-
“ querors, than strengthening the Roman
“ Catholic cause. This is not concluded
“ from theory or speculation, but from what
“ has actually happened in a country, whose
“ divines, by their piety, purity of doctrine,
“ and theological literature, * were among
“ the chief bulwarks of the reformed
“ churches. † Future events are secret
“ things which belong to the Lord. The
“ manner, however, of the final destruction
“ of Popery, is a thing revealed. The ten
“ kings who had given their power and
“ strength unto the beast, shall hate the
“ whore, and make her desolate and naked,
“ and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with
“ fire. This surely can neither mean, that
“ they are to befriend her in the day of her

* Alluding to Holland.

† Sketches, Vol. II. p. 274.

“ fall, nor that her fall was to be accom-
“ plished by their being guillotined or de-
“ throned. The publisher, therefore, sees
“ no ground to conclude, that overturning
“ the present monarchies, and religious
“ establishments in Europe, is any where
“ in scripture represented, as a forerunner
“ of the destruction of Antichrist, or tends
“ to the accomplishment of that event. He
“ rather apprehends that Antichrist will re-
“ cover his lost power, and use it more
“ cruelly than ever; and that the reason-
“ ings and warnings of Venema* on that
“ head, deserve the most serious atten-
“ tion. †

He hazarded these remarks, contrary to his usual caution on subjects of this kind; and the events which have happened since these paragraphs were written, have certainly confirmed his opinion, as far as it was applicable to the revolutions which were immediately in his view.

In the same year, (1790,) Dr Erskine

* Sketches, Vol. II. No. 3. p. 239—250.

† Ibid. p. 276, 277.

published Consolatory Letters on the Death of Children or Friends, which he had collected from books or manuscripts ; of which he gave a new edition, with a Supplement, in 1800.

This collection begins with a Letter from Servius Sulpicius to Cicero, on the Death of his Daughter, and Cicero's Reply.

He intended, by this article, to contrast the best sources of consolation, which the most enlightened men of the Heathen world could derive from the unassisted light of nature, with the much more efficient and animating consolations, with which Christianity furnishes sincere believers of the Gospel, under the pressure of their heaviest calamities.

The letters which follow are, excepting the letter from Mr Howe to Lady Russell, all written by persons, who lived late in the last century ; and the greatest part of them by individuals, who were personally and intimately known to Dr Erskine. They certainly contain some of the most striking and impressive views of Christian consola-

tions ; especially of those which are applied to the death of children ; or to the intentions of Providence in bringing into the world multitudes of human beings, who are not permitted to live, till they become capable of acting any part in it.

Some of the letters embrace other subjects, and contain singular narratives of providential events. But the death of children forms, at least, a prominent subject in the collection ; and the practical consolations which are applied to this calamity, as well as to other severe afflictions, are, in several instances, original ; and all of them are well calculated to illustrate the solid advantages derived from Christianity, and from the faithful application of Christian principles, to the most difficult and trying situations of human life.

The publisher writes nothing more than the preface to this collection ; and in this instance, as on all other occasions, he was much more solicitous to perform what he thought a useful service to the public, than to acquire any reputation to himself.

Any additional remarks suggested by this publication will naturally occur, after the insertion of the following letters, in one of which it is particularly referred to.

Dr Erskine's correspondence with Sir David Dalrymple (Lord Hailes) will be read with equal interest, by literary and religious men. Eminent as a man of letters, and far more eminent as a man of principle, Lord Hailes will, as long as the substance of either learning or religion shall have an existence in his country, be transmitted to posterity, not only as a man of profound research and ability on the most important subjects of history and antiquity, and as a classical scholar of the first order; but as a learned and successful defender of Christianity, in opposition to its ablest and most insidious opponents.

The following letters are inserted in the order, in which they appear to have been written. Some of them have no date; but the time to which they must be referred, is ascertained by their contents. The first is dated June 4th 1790, and was immedi-

ately occasioned by the publication of the first volume of Dr Erskine's *Sketches*, of which he had sent Lord Hailes a copy.

“ REVEREND SIR,—I am singularly obliged to you for your *Sketches and Hints*; a valuable work, and affording much new information—new at least to me.

“ It is a pity that the great information from Germany had not been printed in separate paragraphs, with a marginal summary; thus, *Austria, Ausburgh, Anspach*, &c. This would have made every thing more distinct. At present, if one should wish to look back to any particular article, he must read the whole treatise to find it.

“ You suppose, that the late Empress Queen was a bigot to the Roman Catholic religion. I doubt the fact. It is much suspected, that her mother, of the Brunswick family, was inclined to Protestantism to the last; and I do not know that the Empress Queen ever persecuted the Protestants in her dominions, though, very possibly, she may have

“ punished persons who were too forward
“ in claiming *legal toleration*, when they
“ had nothing to depend on but *indul-*
“ *gence*.

“ Her son, the late Emperor, has been
“ more abused in newspapers, than any
“ prince within my remembrance. I sup-
“ pose that posterity will do him that jus-
“ tice, which his contemporaries have denied
“ him. He did more to “ *break the charm*
“ *of Popery*,” than any prince in our times,
“ and he made large advances towards
“ reforming ecclesiastical abuses, and the
“ establishing of *toleration* ; than in so short
“ a reign, and with so many obstacles,
“ could have been expected. Yet he is the
“ *ambitious tyrannical Joseph*. His conduct
“ in the Low Countries has been execrated,
“ and the conduct of his adversaries extol-
“ led, with a degree of enthusiastic praise.
“ But the time will come, when men, re-
“ stored to their calm recollection, must see
“ that his plans tended, to abolish heritable
“ jurisdictions in the Low Countries ; to
“ suppress the exorbitant numbers of con-

“ vents ; to turn the number of colleges at
“ Louvain into one ; to mitigate the Popish
“ teaching there ; and to establish a tolera-
“ tion of Protestants.

“ Perhaps he had not a right to do all
“ this. Certainly he had not power to do
“ it.

“ His brother, the King of Hungary, in
“ the narrow sphere of Tuscany, has done
“ much towards reformation. It was a
“ great step, of appointing the church ser-
“ vice to be in the vulgar tongue ; and a
“ greater still, to dislodge so many statues
“ of saints from their old niches.

“ I have heard of a saying of the late
“ Emperor, which deserves to be remember-
“ ed. Some one asked him, if he was not
“ afraid of the priests, while he strove to
“ make so many innovations. Not at all,
“ said he, the priests will never attempt my
“ life, for they know, that my brother Leo-
“ pold is much worse than I am.

“ There are in your collections some
“ pleasing proofs, that the Lutherans in
“ Germany are in better terms with the

“ Calvinists, than formerly. I think, that by
“ mutual forbearance, and a reciprocal re-
“ solution, not to agitate the questions,
“ which at an early period set them at
“ variance, more charity and Christian good
“ will may come to prevail, in the German
“ churches of the reformation.

“ The abstracts from M. Vernet are very
“ valuable. In some particulars, I do not
“ altogether agree with him. For example,
“ I still doubt, and more than doubt, as to
“ the proposal in the reign of Tiberius, for
“ receiving the Lord among the heathen
“ divinities. My friend Bishop Warburton
“ adopted the same hypothesis, with M.
“ Vernet. But he has not made me a con-
“ vert to it. If you know of any author
“ who has treated of that subject *ex professo*,
“ I beg that you would point him out.

“ I now come to a part of your work
“ which I must take notice of; and yet I
“ know not what to say; and that is, your
“ expressions respecting my publications in
“ the common cause. *Laudari a laudato* is
“ very pleasing. But, at the same time, it

“ is apt to excite that vanity which lurks
“ in self. To this there is a counter-ba-
“ lance, when I look at the bales of copies,
“ of ‘ *The Remains of Christian Antiquity*,’
“ which are upon hand. My translations
“ and notes, contained in the three vo-
“ lumes, cost me much labour and time,
“ and yet few books have been less success-
“ ful, in point of sale. I cannot grudge the
“ labour and time, which I bestowed on
“ them, because they procured me the
“ friendship of some learned and pious
“ men ; but I believe that the public has
“ not much profited by them.

“ These discouragements, notwithstand-
“ ing, I go on in my old way, and am at
“ present engaged in the printing of a trans-
“ lation of the address of Tertullian to Sca-
“ pula, proconsul of Africa. It is a valu-
“ able treatise ; has very little exception-
“ able in it ; which cannot be said of other
“ works of Tertullian ; and contains sundry
“ interesting particulars of church history.

“ But, what engaged me chiefly in the
“ making of this translation was, that it af-

“forded me an opportunity of making re-
“marks on Mr Gibbon. These are not
“confined to ecclesiastical history ; for I
“have detected some strange errors, in what
“Mr Gibbon says as to civil history ; such
“errors as may serve for a specimen of
“what might be said, were one to enter in-
“to a critical inquiry, concerning his work
“at large. I mean, if my health serve me,
“to add a small treatise or two, written, by
“Cyprian during the heat of persecution.

“Wishing you health and spirits to go
“on in your duty, I am, Dear Sir, your
“most obliged and affectionate humble ser-
“vant, DAV. DALRYMPLE.—*New Hailes*,
“4th June 1790.—God make us thankful
“for the joyful return of this anniversary.”

Dr Erskine could not but be gratified, by the approbation expressed in this letter, of his “Sketches of Ecclesiastical History,” by so competent a judge as Lord Hailes.

His Lordship’s remarks on the character of the Empress Queen, on the temper of the Lutherans and Calvinists, as well as on

the abstracts from M. Vernet, shew the minuteness, with which he had attended to the different articles, and the value of an opinion, which was founded in his knowledge of the subject, more than in his partiality for the author.

His observations in particular, on the Empress Queen, and her two sons, are evidently the result of much reflection on the subject. The visionary phantoms of reformation, and the horrible revolutions which the last thirty years have produced, have not only thrown into the shade, and almost consigned to oblivion, the comparatively moderate and peaceful arrangements of Joseph and Leopold, but have ultimately confounded them, with the anarchy and crimes which afterwards desolated Europe.

His Lordship's view of the innovations, attempted both by Joseph and Leopold, was, at that time, the common opinion of those in Great Britain, who professed to wish well to the interests of Protestantism, and to the liberties of mankind.

On the Continent, the Catholics were cer-

tainly alarmed, as well as all the different orders of men who had an interest in the ancient usages. Among the clergy and the bigots, the Emperor very naturally received the title of *the ambitious and tyrannical Joseph*; and he was, perhaps, too sanguine, when he supposed, that they imagined themselves to be safer in his hands, than they would have been under Leopold, his successor.

Whether either Joseph or Leopold had a right, under the constitution of the existing governments, to make the innovations which they attempted, Lord Hailes very naturally states as a doubtful question. But his view of their intentions was probably correct; and the plans of reformation which they meditated, and which were probably concerted, might have been more completely carried into effect, if Joseph had lived longer.

There were, even at that time, many individuals on the Continent, who ascribed the innovations of the Emperor to his desire to fill his military chest, at the expence of the suppressed religious houses, rather

than to a principle of more general advantage to his dominions.

The proceedings of Leopold in Tuscany, connected with the views of the Emperor, certainly contradicted these suppositions ; and are much more naturally explained, by Lord Hailes's idea, of the education which both had received from the Empress Queen ; by the opinion which he expresses with regard to her personal character ; and by the private habits of thinking, in which he supposes her to have been trained by her mother, who had retained them from her education in the Brunswick family, of whom she was descended.

It may perhaps be recollected by some of those who remember that time, that there was a correspondence between the Pope and the Emperor Joseph, on the subject of his ecclesiastical innovations, while they were in progress—The Pope, with great smoothness and address, remonstrating against them, in name of the Catholic church ; and the Emperor replying, with every degree of personal respect to the

Pope, and with many professions of reverence for the *general* interests of religion, but without making any concessions whatever, in favour of ecclesiastical abuses.

This correspondence could not be publicly avowed, though it was widely circulated. But it was so far authenticated, that the individuals in the Court of Rome, who should have had access to be well informed, were then understood to have censured their master, for having unnecessarily committed himself, where he had not the power to command success.

The modesty and unpretending simplicity of mind, with which, such a man as Lord Hailes could mention, the well deserved compliments paid by Dr Erskine, * to his most exemplary and meritorious labours for the service of the Christian church, are extremely interesting. They are doubly so, when they are connected with what his Lordship added, that, though "*laudari a laudato*" was in itself very plea-

* Sketches and Hints, Vol. I. p. 144, note.

sing, it was in his case counterbalanced, by the neglect which had been shewn to his “*Remains of Christian Antiquity*,” of which so great a proportion was left on the bookseller’s shelf ; *—a work which well entitled him to public countenance and gratitude ; and which had cost him, who had so many important occupations besides, both much labour and time.

Happily he was not discouraged ; and the concluding paragraph of his letter mentions another work, of the same kind, which was already in the printer’s hands, and which was published a few months after.

Lord Hailes had a far higher reward, than any literary success could procure him. He had the consciousness of having devoted his eminent talents to the service of Christ ; and every one who can estimate fairly what he has done, may recollect what

* The bales of copies which his Lordship mentions *as then on hand*, have, notwithstanding, been since almost completely sold off ; though, perhaps, a considerable part remained with the bookseller, during his Lordship’s life.

Christ has said to a faithful servant, “ For
“ my name’s sake thou hast laboured, and
“ hast not fainted.”

His Lordship had published, several years before this letter was written, his two separate volumes, on the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Mr Gibbon’s History ; which do equal honour to his learning and research, to his critical accuracy, and to his Christian sincerity. Independent of all that he wrote besides—and few men of letters have employed profound learning, and indefatigable industry, more successfully—these two small volumes are alone sufficient, to place him in the first rank, of able and eminent defenders of the Christian faith.

Mr Gibbon, in his posthumous works, attempts in vain to escape from the detection of his errors, both of negligence and intention, which these volumes contain ; by saying nothing more, than that Lord Hailes had assailed him, *with all the minuteness of a special pleader*. His inquiry is indeed minute ; but its conclusions are as completely

demonstrated, as any fact or proposition of the same kind has ever been.

His translation of Tertullian's address to Scapula, was perhaps chiefly occasioned, by his having discovered, from the perusal of the original, that it would give him an opportunity of making remarks on Mr Gibbon's work, with regard to other points, than those which relate exclusively to ecclesiastical history. He thought he perceived errors of considerable magnitude, in his account of civil transactions, as well as in his representation of the affairs of the church.

The postscript relating to the King's birth-day was evidently intended, to refer to his recovery from his first illness.

The publication of Tertullian's address appeared soon after, and is alluded to in the following letter, which has no date, but which ought to be referred to some of the last months in the year 1790.

“ REVEREND SIR,—I am glad that my
“ notes have afforded you any entertain-
“ ment. The last note, beginning at page

“ 124, is, when well studied, the severest
“ against Mr Gibbon. But by your not
“ referring to it in particular, I am afraid
“ that *there*, as on former occasions, my in-
“ uendos are too much covered.

“ The note beginning at page 62 is, as
“ you justly remark, too long ; but hear my
“ apology. Rigaltius, the last commenta-
“ tor on Tertullian, did not understand
“ the passage about *Domus and Hypsoma*.
“ I wished to have every thing explained,
“ that could be explained. I made my ap-
“ plications to a learned man for his aid.
“ He confessed his inability ; but referred
“ me to another learned man of my ac-
“ quaintance ; and from him I got the note.
“ Not being master of the subject, or ra-
“ ther being ignorant of it, I could not
“ abridge the note ; and so published it,
“ just as it was communicated by my
“ friend.

“ Your observations on the phrase, ‘ *Ma-
“ trimonium nullius adulteramus*,’ is very a-
“ cute, and will be used in a second edi-
“ tion, if such should ever be published.

“ The note about *the Warburtonian school*
“ relates to an anonymous publication, con-
“ taining, among other things, some trans-
“ lations, in prose and in verse, from La-
“ tin authors ; all made by Bishop War-
“ burton, when very young ; and partly, as
“ it should seem, when a mere boy. They
“ were published, from that impatience of
“ being seen in print, so incident to young
“ writers : and they were forgotten.

“ A man, eminent for knowledge in the
“ languages, very invidiously republished
“ them lately ; and added two little trea-
“ tises, supposed to have been written,
“ near forty years ago, by Bishop Hurd,
“ on account of some things said against
“ Bishop Warburton, by Dr Jortin and a
“ Dr Leland, (not the author of the *View*
“ of the Deistical Writers.)

“ This also I considered as an invidious
“ publication, because the controversy with
“ Dr Leland was a slight and occasional
“ thing ; and because the dispute between
“ Dr Jortin and Bishop Warburton termi-
“ nated, *as such things should do*, (these were

“ the words of Dr Jortin to me,) in an amicable way.

“ Dr Jortin, I am afraid, did not include Bishop Hurd in the treaty of peace ; for he made some allusion to this dispute, in a note, in the Life of Erasmus, which contains an oblique sneer, at something supposed to have been said by Dr Hurd.

“ Of this no notice was taken ; and the whole matter would have been forgotten, had it not been recalled to men’s memory, by the publication in question, which is accompanied with many notes.

“ The notes sometimes extol, and sometimes degrade, Bishop Warburton ; sometimes faintly praise, and, at other times, abuse Bishop Hurd, in a very illiberal way. I can see, through the whole of the notes, a party-spirit, and an envious disposition, on account of the personal favour shewn by the King to Bishop Hurd. His Majesty’s liking to Bishop Hurd is the truest thing in the book. This I saw very clearly, in the course of a conversa-

“ tion, which the King did me the honour
“ lately of holding with me.

“ The publisher of the work highly prais-
“ ed Bishop Halifax, by name ; and yet, as
“ I now suspect, censures and ridicules
“ him, without a name, in the passage
“ which gave occasion to my note.

“ Some days ago, I had a letter from Bi-
“ shop Hurd, dated Hartlebury, 25th Oc-
“ tober, which contains the following para-
“ graph :—“ I have received an obliging
“ letter, from your good friend Mr Erskine.
“ When you see him, I beg your Lordship
“ will present my respects to him, and let
“ him know, that I shall acknowledge his
“ goodness to me, as soon as I have read
“ his book, which, he tells me, is directed to
“ be sent to my house in town.”

“ From an expression in this letter, I am
“ led to suppose, that, in your letter to the
“ Bishop, you said something favourable of
“ me ; for which you have my best thanks.
“ I should rejoice to deserve your good opi-
“ nion ; and ever am, Dear Sir, your most

“ affectionate, and most obliged humble
“ servant, DAV. DALRYMPLE.”

Lord Hailes’s translation of Tertullian’s Address has a peculiar form, from the exclusion of French auxiliaries, for which he accounts in his Preface. In this respect, it is a literary curiosity, which is not without its use, though, as an example of English writing, it is not probable, that it will be often followed.

The notes are certainly entitled to great consideration and praise. They, in general, relate to points which are very important ; and every learned reader will perceive the indisputable inaccuracies, which Lord Hailes has there detected, in the work of Mr Gibbon, as well as the justice of his remarks on authors of less celebrity. He has clearly shewn, what he professed, in his preface, to have discovered, “ that, even in the
“ first volume of *the Decline and Fall of the*
“ *Roman Empire*, and independently of the
“ *two famous chapters*, there is a wide field
“ for literary and historical criticism.”

It is no answer to such remarks, as Lord

Hailes has published, that “ they have the “ minuteness of a special pleader.” If they were less minute than they are, they would be completely useless. Such careless or intentional mistakes as are imputed to Mr Gibbon, there are no possible means of tracing or correcting, without a most *minute* investigation; and few individuals, indeed, could have attempted such a task, with the success or perseverance of Lord Hailes. It was scarcely possible for a single person, who had other occupations, to have *completed* such a task; but his Lordship has distinctly shewn the way, in which it might have been accomplished. The least important of his notes is that which he received from a friend. The substance of it is probably correct; but Dr Erskine was right, when he complained of it as too long.

Of his note about “ *the Warburtonian School*,” there is no occasion to say more, than that it shews his Lordship’s attachment to his literary friends, and the affectionate interest with which he regarded their memory.

He is probably right in his objection to the use of this epithet, considering the quarter from which it originally proceeded. But it is unpleasant to observe, from the paragraph with which he has connected it in the preceding letter, that the dispute between such considerable men as Warburton, Hurd, and Jortin, is so frequently brought before the public, when they can no longer answer for themselves. It is a circumstance which affords a striking lesson to other men, whose names are likely to survive them, to keep their private differences among themselves, so as not to give an opportunity to others to publish them to the world, after their death ; and, above all, to save their friends from the mortification, of finding them transmitted to posterity in their own writings.

There are no human beings free from defects, or incapable of shewing them in their private competitions. But the public may well forget the weaknesses of eminent men, in the honour due to their learning, and to their acknowledged services to religion or

literature. Warburton's name will always hold a prominent place, in the literary and theological history of his time. Hurd's *Discourses on Prophecy*, and Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*, as well as his *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, will be read with advantage and delight, long after every private competition of the age in which they wrote, shall be buried in oblivion.

It is gratifying to observe the personal interest, which Lord Hailes took in the reputation, and in the memory, of his friends. The concluding sentence of the preceding letter affords another specimen, of the unassuming modesty, with which he contemplated every thing which related to himself, and affords a striking lesson to men, who have no pretensions to be compared with him.

The extract given from Dr Hurd's correspondence, ascertains the date of the preceding letter. It was written in the autumn, probably in October 1790; for, it will afterwards appear, that, in the following November, Dr Hurd wrote Dr Erskine, that

he had then read his book, which had not reached him when he wrote Lord Hailes.

The last letter from Lord Hailes to be inserted here, is also without a date ; but, it is evident, that it must have been written, after the publication of Dr Erskine's Consolatory Letters in 1790. It contains a considerable variety of subject, and the opinions of his Lordship on some very important points.

“ REVEREND SIR,—I return you many
“ thanks for M. Servan's Treatise, which
“ I have perused, and now return.

“ From his style, one sees the unsettled
“ state of the French language. A French-
“ man, of the times of Louis the 14th, if
“ he did not understand Latin, would have
“ been puzzled at every page of M. Servan,
“ to find out his meaning.

“ I was at some pains to see, whether I
“ could discover the sentiments of the au-
“ thor, as to religion. In a passage or two,
“ he seems to speak like a Theist ; but one
“ can hardly conclude any thing, from such

“ casual expressions. The manner in which
“ he speaks of Voltaire shews him to be the
“ admirer, and the apologist, of that writer ;
“ and, upon the whole, I doubt, whether
“ M. Servan has any belief of Christianity
“ at all.

“ There is a very singular case put at
“ page 91 : ‘ La personne à qui l’on écrit
“ règle souvent le ton, la tour, et le fond,
“ des pensées d’une lettre. Tel homme,
“ fort réservé en public, sur les matières de
“ religion, aura, par exemple, en écrivant à
“ M. de Voltaire, pu s’abandonner à des
“ plaisanteries fort éloignées de son cha-
“ ractere.’

“ Here I suspect that M. Servan may be
“ describing himself. The sentiment itself
“ is extraordinary enough. He supposes
“ that a man is very cautious, in disclosing his
“ sentiments in public, as to religion ; but,
“ in writing to Voltaire, that he allows him-
“ self full liberty to jest on such subjects.

“ My conclusion would be, that such a
“ man, however cautious in public, was a
“ concealed infidel. M. Servan says, that

“ such jesting would be very different from
“ the man’s *character*. In this word, there
“ is an ambiguity. Such jesting would not
“ be agreeable to his *assumed character* ;
“ but perfectly consistent with his *real cha-*
“ *racter*. And I have not charity enough
“ to suppose, that he who, in writing to
“ Voltaire, jested on religion, was any thing
“ else in his heart, but a *scoffer*.

“ M. Servan has maintained his *Thesis*, on
“ the impropriety of publishing posthumous
“ pieces or letters, written in confidence,
“ with much ability. But he does not con-
“ vince me, of the justness of his proposi-
“ tion, in its full extent.

“ If I receive a letter from a person,
“ which contains things hurtful to the cha-
“ racter of that person, or things which he
“ would not wish to have made public, I
“ should suppress them, unless obedience
“ to the commands of the law, or a sense of
“ duty to society, obliged me to reveal them.
“ But that the same rule is to take place for
“ ever, and after I and my correspondent

“ are in our graves, is, I think, to carry
“ matters too far.

“ Suppose *that* to be the rule, and apply
“ it to past times, and see how history
“ would be darkened. For example, with-
“ out such letters, how little would be known
“ of the history of the last century? To give
“ one instance out of a hundred.—What
“ would have been known of the character
“ and conduct of M. de Maintenon, with-
“ out such publications? And yet that is
“ necessary for the knowledge of forty years,
“ of the reign of Louis the 14th.

“ Without such publications, we cannot
“ have a just notion of the virtues or vices
“ of eminent persons; but we must take
“ them, just as we find them in panegyrics
“ and satires, published in their own time.

“ What is said of letters seems appli-
“ cable to memoirs and histories, left in
“ manuscript by the authors. Had M.
“ Servan’s rule been followed for a couple
“ of centuries back, what havoc would it
“ have made in history? I don’t see why,
“ if a seal be so sacred, conversation ought

“ not to be as sacred. His great fear is,
“ that, by such publications, the opinions
“ and manners of men may be proved to
“ be universally bad and flagitious. But if
“ the world be so bad, as to be past mend-
“ ing, society will soon be at an end ; and
“ a little sooner, or a little later, makes no
“ great difference.

“ M. Servan takes it for granted, that
“ the corruption of morals is *universal* in
“ France. It may be so. But unless he
“ knew the hearts of all men, he has no
“ right to say it. A greater person than
“ *he*, thought himself *alone*, and, in a des-
“ ponding mood, said so. And yet there
“ were thousands who, without his know-
“ ledge, thought and acted like that solitary
“ person, in matters of religion.

“ There are many observations, which
“ occur on M. Servan’s work, that I have
“ not leisure to set down. It is remarkable,
“ that not a word, about reformation of man-
“ ners, occurs in it.

“ One good lesson, from the daily publica-
“ tion of letters, seems to have escaped him.

“ Those who reflect, to what accidents their
“ letters are subject, will, however infidel,
“ learn prudence enough, not to correspond
“ on subjects of infidelity. *Ils ne s’aban-*
“ *donneront pas à des plaisanteries sur la*
“ *religion* ; and this will diminish the num-
“ ber of irreligious publications.

“ M. Servan has a whimsical notion, as
“ to letters produced in courts of justice.
“ He would leave to the judges, the power
“ of selecting what is material to the cause,
“ *without the knowledge of the parties*. I
“ hope, that such a rule will never be esta-
“ blished with us. I should not wish to
“ be a judge, with such powers.

“ As to the Confessions of Rousseau, I
“ never saw the book ; but I persuade my-
“ self that the author meant to have it pub-
“ lished, to gratify his spleen in wholesale.
“ Indeed, I never read twenty pages of that
“ author’s works. I heard that his senti-
“ ments differed, in many particulars, from
“ those which I had long ago formed ; and I
“ was not very fond of entering into a course
“ of such reading, in such circumstances.

“ With respect to the matters contained
“ in your letter, I have no doubt as to the
“ promises to the children of believers, as I
“ have no objection to the notion, that the
“ blessed shall know their friends, in a fu-
“ ture state ; because I see nothing in Scrip-
“ ture, which excludes that notion ; and be-
“ cause, wherever the opinion of a future
“ state prevailed, it prevailed. But *there*
“ I should incline to stop, and not be more
“ curious.

“ The things which I meant to object to,
“ in my friend Mr Randall’s letter, are,
“ ‘ I cannot see from reason,’ &c. This
“ seems a desponding sentiment, and not
“ consistent with the notions, which we ought
“ to entertain, of the goodness of God. From
“ instinct we rejoice, and where got we
“ that instinct? Is our reason to see cause
“ to contradict it? I have read of some
“ barbarous nation, that wept when their
“ children were born, and rejoiced when
“ they died. Supposing the fact to be true,
“ shall we say that ‘ they saw no cause from
“ reason?’ &c.

“ No doubt the best, even of Christians,
“ may be afflicted in their children. But
“ we are not to argue from *particulars*, to
“ *generals* ; and, besides, I trust, that afflict-
“ tions of this nature have, as I may say,
“ some counterpoise, and, perhaps, even in
“ kind. The tenderness of Joseph might
“ overbalance the bloodthirstiness and re-
“ venge of Simeon and Levi. The Psalm-
“ ist, who said, ‘ Happy is the man who
“ hath his quiver full of them,’ saw cause
“ *in* reason to rejoice ; though my friend,
“ *peculiarly happy in his quiver*, spoke so un-
“ guardedly ; and it will not be enough to
“ say, that his children were Christians, un-
“ less we were to hold, that none but Christ-
“ ians have good provided for them in this
“ life.

“ Presently after, he treats of the number
“ of those who die in infancy, and attempts
“ to discover the reason of it. Surely this
“ is too high for us. Mr Randall does not
“ make those secret things of the Almighty,
“ a whit plainer, than they were before.

“ They must be dark, until they are revealed.

“ What Mr Gillespie says, of the kingdom of heaven being principally composed of little children, p. 53, may be allowed, if he means, that the number of those who die in infancy, is greater than that of those, who attain to years of discretion. But I imagine that he has some other meaning. I never could see any difficulty in a text, which our Lord himself has explained ; and I own, that when I have such a commentator, I ask for no other, and disregard all others.

“ I ever am, Reverend Sir, your most obliged humble servant,

“ DAV. DALRYMPLE.”

M. Servan, to whom the chief part of this letter relates, was an “ *ancien Avocat General*,” in the Parliament of Grenoble ; and the book alluded to, was entitled “ *Reflexions sur le Confessions de Rousseau*.” It was published at Paris in 1753

In this work the author complained, of

what he considered as unworthy treatment given to M. Bovier, another *avocat* at Grenoble, in Rousseau's Confessions. But he discussed a variety of other subjects, in which M. Bovier had no concern; and treated the Confessions, which were the object of his publication, with a severity which they certainly deserved.

It would have been good for the world, if the writings of Rousseau were more frequently laid aside, than they are, on the principle, on which Lord Hailes excluded them from his studies.

The infidelity of Voltaire had certainly a very extensive influence, and circulation. But it is at least a reasonable doubt, whether the practical mischief done by Rousseau, was less than that, which is imputed to Voltaire, and whether it was not as widely spread.

The sarcastical infidelity and wit of Voltaire was, in a certain degree, addressed to the understandings, as well as to the gaiety, and to the superficial knowledge, of his readers. But the pernicious lessons of Rousseau, ope-

rated directly, on the depravity of the world ; on the strong passions of the youth ; on the heated imaginations of solitary life ; and on every instinct of human nature, which eloquence or sophistry could awaken, to pollute or to degrade it.

Voltaire reasoned, often indirectly, but always coolly, against the authority of religion ; substituting assertions for facts, fable for history, and wit for argument. Rousseau could reason too, with a seductive eloquence, in which he had few superiors ; though he reasoned less, than he declaimed. With all his powers of argument, his infidelity was frequently no more, than the indirect, or remote source, of the mischief which he accomplished. His strength lay in the address, with which he agitated the feelings, and seized on the weakness of the human heart.

His disciples, indeed, believed that he had enlightened their understandings, when he had attempted no more, than to teach them, how to substitute, feeling for principle, and the strong inclinations of the heart, for the

sober convictions of reason or religion. He could certainly argue for religion, with a power of eloquence almost irresistible ; but as soon as he professed to apply his conclusions to practice, his argument is lost, in the delusions of sophistry and vice.

To reason or even to laugh with Voltaire, requires, at least in most instances, some degree of information. But the seduction attempted by Rousseau, might be complete, where even the meaning of his argument was not comprehended.

Lord Hailes thought it a sufficient reason, to decline the perusal of his works, that he understood the opinions which they contained to be opposed to those, which he had, long before, deliberately embraced. It would be happy for the world, if the young, the thoughtless, and the sanguine, could be persuaded to believe, that the most eloquent sophistry of Rousseau, is not only calculated, to deprive them of every thing good or estimable, which they have ever learnt; but to involve them at last, in the most fatal delu-

sions, which lead directly “down to the chambers of death.”

M. Servan could feel the venom of his sting, when it reached the character of his friend; and was much more alive, to the mischiefs done by his confessions, than to the delusions spread by his eloquence and his philosophy.

M. Servan was an admirer of Voltaire; and Lord Hailes was probably right in supposing, that his own religious belief might be like the faith of his master. If he described himself, as his Lordship supposed, by his reserve in public, on subjects of religion, which furnished him with the topics of his pleasantries, or of his sarcasms in his familiar letters, there cannot be much reason to doubt, that this was truly his character.

Though private infidelity is farther removed from public mischief, than the wit or profligacy which is circulated from the press; the confidential letter-writer, who scatters his poison among his private friends, if he has not the guilt of the infidel author,

has the consciousness of guilt which he dares not, or is ashamed to avow to the world ; and, if he has really done injuries to the religion of his associates, has done them with this aggravation, that they are injuries to the individuals, to whom, of all others, he was most bound to have given a salutary or affectionate counsel.

M. Servan expresses himself with severity, against the publication of confidential letters ; and, if Lord Hailes's idea of his own correspondence was correct, had personal reasons for the keenness of his argument.

But so far he was certainly right. There must unquestionably be limits to the publication of confidential correspondence, even after the longest interval. The private calumnies of malignity, and the temporary extravagance of domestic passions, in which individuals alone are concerned, and which have had no public or permanent consequences, ought certainly to be consigned to oblivion. The officious publication of a correspondence, which would lay these open

to the world, or transmit them to posterity, though it should be delayed to a distant period, is not only unjust to the memory of the individuals, but, both from its effect on their descendants, and from its tendency as an example, will, at all times, have a mischievous influence, on the character and conduct of private life.

On the other hand, it is equally clear, that the doctrine laid down by Lord Hailes is indisputably true ; that we should know nothing correctly of the transactions of past times, if we could have no access to the correspondence, which lays open the motives, or details the management, of those, who were either chiefly or subordinately concerned in them. The springs and conduct of almost every thing which can be interesting to posterity, have been originally, in a great measure, confidential. Even the correspondence of individuals in private life, has such an intimate relation to the events of their time, that, unless it were communicated at last, it would be impossible to carry on the history of the world, or to

give it that minuteness or interest, without which it would be of no value.

On this subject, his Lordship's opinion is unquestionably correct. Individuals, who have no cause to reproach themselves for what they have written, can have no right to complain, that their correspondence is preserved, or may be given to the public, after they shall be in their graves.

But there is certainly one important lesson, which others should receive from this consideration. Nothing ought to be written, in the most confidential correspondence, of which their posterity can have reason to be ashamed ; or which, in the opinion of the world, can bring a discredit on their memory.

It is not easy for men, who are deeply engaged in the business of active life, to be always on their guard, when they write to their personal friends or associates ; and it is obvious, that an excess of caution would destroy, both the freedom and the comfort, of confidential intercourse. But the caution of a good man is only employed to keep

him on his guard, against that which should not have been written ; and will neither lessen the freedom of communications which ought to be made, nor the confidence and openness which he owes to his friends.

Lord Hailes's general remarks on the Consolatory Letters, in the conclusion of the preceding letter, and on what Dr Erskine had written him relating to them, is, in substance, correct. There does not seem to be any good reason, for carrying our inquiries with regard to our condition in the world to come, beyond the point, at which his Lordship chose that his should terminate.

He does not appear to have much misapprehended Mr Gillespie's meaning ; and some weight there certainly is, in his Observations on Mr Randall's letter.

It is, perhaps, more than we are completely warranted to say, that we cannot discover, *from reason*, why men should rejoice in the birth of their children ; or that, independent of revelation, there is no natural and legitimate cause, for the satisfac-

tion which such events have, in all ages, produced among the human race.

On this point, Lord Hailes's remark appears to be just. But it should be observed, that, when Mr Randall comes to apply the faith of Christianity to the death of infants, he speaks to the heart of every good man ; and expresses himself with a vigour, and a comprehension of his subject, worthy of a man of genius, such as he certainly was.

The reasons which he ventured to assign, for the introduction of so many human beings into life, who are deprived of it before they can know good or evil, are undoubtedly, as Lord Hailes remarks, beyond our sphere of knowledge. But they are, at least, the speculations of no common mind ; though his Lordship should be admitted to be right in his observation, that such speculations do not make "*the secret things of God*" plainer, than they are without them.

At the same time that he made these remarks, he estimated justly the superior talents of Mr Randall, which he had certainly many opportunities of observing, when he

described him as “ *peculiarly happy in his quiver* ;” though he thought, that, on the occasion referred to, he had not expressed himself with his usual caution.

There is still one letter more to be inserted, on the subject of Dr Erskine’s “ *Sketches of Ecclesiastical History*.” It is from Dr Hurd, the Bishop of Worcester, to whom the author had sent a copy of his first volume. It is dated at “ *Hartlebury, November 13, 1790.*”

“ *REVEREND SIR,—I have at length received, from my house in London, both your books, and return you many thanks for them.*

“ *The Sketches and Hints are curious and useful. As to those in which we are more immediately concerned—I mean on the Subject of Establishments, and the spreading Influence of Infidelity and Atheism—I think your sentiments very wise and just. The source of our present evils is the pride of reason ; and while that turn of mind remains unchecked by a reve-*

“ rence for divine revelation, Socinianism
“ and unbelief naturally flow from it. Es-
“ tablishments, though with toleration, are
“ accounted shackles to our impatient re-
“ formers ; and scriptural truths absurdi-
“ ties, in the eye of those who acknowledge
“ no teacher, but their own understand-
“ ings.

“ Till it please God to infuse a spirit of
“ modesty into our reasoners on churches
“ and creeds, we may lament, but shall
“ hardly remove, the licentiousness we so
“ justly complain of. And if such a work,
“ as that of Bishop *Butler's Analogy*, do not
“ bring back men to their senses, I know of
“ no other human means likely to do it.

“ However, it becomes good and wise
“ men to protest, as you do, against pre-
“ vailing mischiefs, and then to leave the
“ rest to that overruling Providence, who
“ knows how, in his own time, to bring good
“ out of evil.

“ Once more, Sir, let me thank you for
“ your very acceptable present ; and do
“ me the justice to believe me, with great

“ truth and regard, your affectionate brother,
“ ther, and obliged humble servant,

“ R. WORCESTER.”

There is not much in this letter on which any remark is necessary.

It appears that Dr Erskine had sent the Bishop another book, along with the “ Sketches.” But there is no allusion to the subject of it.

His Lordship’s remarks seem chiefly to apply to the first number in the “ Sketches,” which contains extracts from Dr Bonnet’s *Treatise on Ecclesiastical Toleration*; in which he discussed, against Mr Goodricke, the subject of creeds and confessions; and to the third number, which contains extracts from “ the letters of certain Jews, on the present state of the Christian religion.”

The Bishop does not enter deeply, into either of these subjects. He considers the pride of human reason, and an irreverence for divine revelation, as lying at the source of the clamour excited against creeds and confessions—of the loud complaints daily cir-

culated against the shackles of religious establishments—and of the progress of Socinianism and infidelity. And he represents such books as “*Bishop Butler’s Analogy*,” as, under God, the best human means to furnish an antidote to the evils, which he heartily joins Dr Erskine in deploring.

He writes like a man of piety and sincerity ; who, though he thought it unnecessary to enter into a discussion of these subjects with his correspondent, devoutly relied on the overruling providence of God, who best knows when, and how, to bring good out of evil.

Dr Hurd was undoubtedly highly respectable, both as a man of talents and literature, and as a Christian Bishop, who had the best intentions.

He appears to least advantage in his correspondence with Warburton, to whom he discovers a perpetual subserviency, and sometimes, perhaps, a degree of servility ; though, when he published their correspondence, he does not seem to have been aware, that he was conveying this idea of himself to posterity.

CHAP. IX.

Dr Erskine publishes Sermons.—His conduct in the Ecclesiastical Courts.—His Death and Character.

THERE are several minor publications, besides those which have been mentioned, in which Dr Erskine was concerned—Prefaces to books or pamphlets, which he edited,—or additions of his own to the labours of others,—or small publications of local or temporary interest.

It is unnecessary to specify these minutely ; but a complete list of all that he either wrote or edited, will be found at the end of the Appendix. *

His two volumes of sermons, the first published in two editions during his life, and the last after his death, ought to be mentioned by themselves.

In the present state of the British press, there is so much attention paid to language

* Appendix, No. III.

and composition, that the substance of the best productions is apt to be neglected, if they want the minute correctness, or the ornaments, which the fastidious taste of the public requires. Dr Erskine says, in his first publication, that he had not made the study of the English language an object of particular attention. And, it must be evident to those who consult his writings, that, to the end of his life, he satisfied himself, when he expressed his meaning with perspicuity, in the first words which occurred to him, without much solicitude about the niceties of language.

He brings out his ideas with equal clearness and simplicity, in the language which naturally presents itself, and does not seem to have looked back with a fastidious solicitude, to curtail or polish what he has written.

But if the simplicity of his style excludes the ornaments of an artificial structure, it is always clear, and never intricate. If his sentences are not anxiously or exactly measured, they are uniformly forcible, and never slovenly. He expresses himself always,

in the language of an acute and vigorous understanding, which never misses the point which it professes to have in view; and which is seldom indeed deficient, either in the perspicuity of its argument, or in the variety of its illustrations.

Considering his sermons in this light, they will bear the most attentive examination. They are not in the newest, or the most fashionable garb. But they contain a vigour of thought, an extent of information, and a force of argument, which are not the productions of a common mind.

His general doctrine is Calvinistical. But it is not the vulgar Calvinism, which exhausts itself on intricate and mysterious dogmas; which more frequently addresses the imaginations, than the understandings of the people; and which it is easy to separate, both from the business and the duties of human life.

He lays down the doctrines of Christianity without reserve, according to his conception of them; and loses no opportunity, either to trace them to their source, or to

illustrate their relation to each other. But practical religion is uniformly his leading and principal object. Sound morality, in all its varied forms and aspects, founded on Christian principles, and enforced by Christian motives, occupies far the greatest part of his two volumes.

He searches the human heart, and enters into the business of human life, with the penetration of one who was qualified to analyze, and who had well considered both. It will seldom be found, that he fails, either to reach the understanding which he labours to convince, or to urge the most powerful considerations on the conscience which he is anxious to rouse.

His readers will not find in his sermons, either the splendour of imagery, or the eloquence of passion. But he will uniformly find plain good sense, and sound argument, enforcing Christian morality, from an extensive and enlightened acquaintance, both with scriptural doctrine, and with the conduct of human life.

These observations are designed to give

a general idea of the spirit and character of Dr Erskine's sermons. But there is no intention to affirm, that they are all equally applicable to every discourse in his two volumes.

Like every other author, he is, at different times, more and less successful. But they who are competent to form a dispassionate estimate of the substance of both volumes, will perhaps be disposed to think, rather that too little, than that too much, has been said of them ; and that, from the specimens which are there preserved, it may well be questioned, whether the city of Edinburgh has, at any period, possessed an abler, a more faithful, a more enlightened, or a more practical preacher.

The sermons of Blair, and Walker, and Drysdale, and Logan, are justly celebrated for their elegance, as well as for their practical effect ; and the church to which they belonged need not blush to produce them, wherever the merit of sermons can be estimated. But none of these celebrated writers would have felt that his labours were

degraded, by a comparison with the theological morality, the acute discrimination, or the practical effect of Dr Erskine's discourses. *

* His sermon, occasioned by the death of Dr Robertson, is most particularly distinguished by Mr Stewart, in his life of that celebrated historian; and the reader will be gratified by the perusal of the following paragraph taken from his narrative.

To understand the allusions contained in it, it is necessary to mention, that in the two parties which are supposed to divide the members of the Scottish Church, Dr Robertson and Dr Erskine were always set down as acting on different sides. And alluding to this circumstance, in relating Dr Robertson's retreat from the public business of the Assembly, his biographer has expressed himself in the following marked and eloquent terms, on the sermon, preached immediately after his funeral, by his venerable colleague.

"Dr Robertson's retreat," he says, "was deeply regretted and sincerely felt by his friends; nor was it less lamented by many individuals of the opposite party in the church, who, while they resisted his principles of ecclesiastical policy, loved his candour, and respected his integrity. Among these, there is one, whose liberal and affectionate zeal in embalming the memory of a political antagonist, recalls to our recollection, amidst the unrelenting rancour which disgraces the factions of modern times, the memorable tribute which Metellus paid to the virtues of Scipio, on the day of his funeral: *Ite filii, celebrate exequias; nunquam civis majoris funus videbitis*. I need scarcely, after what I have hinted, mention the name of Dr Erskine; of whose sermon on the death of his colleague, it is difficult to say, whether it re-

It is necessary to mention Dr Erskine's conduct in the Ecclesiastical Courts, and in public business in other departments, though this is a subject which neither requires nor admits of much enlargement or detail.

The subordination of the church courts, and the business transacted in them, will be seen in the Appendix. From their intimate connection with pastoral duty and usefulness, Dr Erskine, as might be naturally supposed, was equally conscientious in his attendance on them, and in the duties which they imposed on him.

He was seldom absent, while he was in health, from a presbytery or synod, and never from a General Assembly, of which he was a member. He continued, indeed, to give very regular attendance, even after he

“ reflects greater honour on the character of the writer, or of
“ him whom it commemorates. The author will, I hope,
“ pardon me for transcribing one passage, which is intimately
“ connected with this part of my subject, and which combines
“ with a testimony of inestimable value to Dr Robertson's
“ fame, some important information, which I could not supply
“ from any source of equal authority.” To this paragraph Mr
Stewart subjoins a long extract from the sermon. Stewart's
Life of Dr Robertson, p. 187, 188.

was far advanced in his decline. He entered into public business, with the keenness natural to his character, and with a visible solicitude applied to almost every case, which was evidently the effect of his sense of duty.

He might not always, perhaps, measure, with perfect correctness, the degree of attention which he gave to particular cases, and might attach to some questions more importance, than was intrinsically due to them.

But in this, as in every other instance, he aspired, not to reputation, but to usefulness ; and wherever he thought he saw the means of being useful, though in the least degree, it was not easy to divert him from the point which he had laboured to attain, even when his friends thought it of less importance than he supposed it.

On subjects of more general or acknowledged importance, though his public speaking had some disadvantages of manner, there were few individuals whose argument was closer or more forcible ; who had a quicker discernment of the precise points

on which a question depended ; or who was more uniformly successful in stating them clearly ; whose legal and constitutional knowledge was more exact ; or whose research or authorities supplied them with more incontrovertible statements.

In the great controversy, in 1789, on the scrutiny in the election of the Clerk of Assembly, which turned entirely on points of law, and precedent, and which was prolonged for eight days together, no individual distinguished himself more, or was more successful in his research, or in his argument. Though he was then at the age of sixty-eight, he entered into the debates of that bustling Assembly, (which sometimes lasted till after three o'clock in the morning, though the hour of meeting was ten in the forenoon) with all the keenness and self-possession, of the youngest and most ardent of his brethren. Nor was there a single individual, who discovered a more minute and accurate acquaintance, either with the precedents or with the ecclesiasti-

cal laws, in which the points at issue were involved.*

At a much earlier period, (in 1767,) he distinguished himself with equal ability, in arguing the validity of a presentation to the parish of St Ninian's in Stirlingshire; in opposition, not only to the greatest part of the friends with whom he commonly acted, but to some of the most eminent lawyers who were then in the Assembly.

The decision in that case, to which his argument in a considerable degree contri-

* This case has been mentioned, merely because it exhibited a striking example of Dr Erskine's capacity in public debate.

The competition for the Clerkship referred to, was very keenly prosecuted on both sides. Mr Andrew Dalzel, the celebrated Professor of Greek in the University of Edinburgh, was the successful candidate for whom Dr Erskine exerted himself, who for many years did honour to the chair, in which the Assembly placed him—whose eminent talents in his own profession entitled him to every distinction within his reach—and whose private worth and affectionate character will never be forgotten by his friends who have survived him.

He succeeded his father-in-law, Dr Drysdale, as Clerk of the Assembly; who was not more distinguished by his capacity for public business, which gave him the confidence of his friends, than by his open and conciliating manners, which so often disarmed the hostility of his opponents.

buted, set at rest a question, which had not before been settled, relating to the term at which a vacancy in a parochial charge, occasioned by the translation of a minister from one benefice to another, commences, and from which the six months allowed to the patron for presenting, are to be computed. There had been contrary decisions given by the Assembly on this subject, which had been a source of very considerable embarrassment and confusion.

The point has, ever since, been held as so completely decided, that the present members of the Church are scarcely aware, that it was ever made a subject of doubt.

It was not on every occasion, that Dr Erskine exerted himself in the same manner, in the Ecclesiastical Courts. But these examples afford a sufficient specimen of the acuteness and industry, which he could bring to the management of public business, when he thought such an exertion was required of him. And the last case serves to demonstrate, that no party feeling prevented him from following the judgment

of his own mind, even when it was most at variance with the views of those, with whom, on other occasions, he agreed.

On the leading questions, by which the church parties are understood to be divided, relating to the induction of the parochial clergy, Dr Erskine coincided with those who contended for the necessity of a call from heritors and elders, to constitute the pastoral relation, between a presentee to a benefice, and the people of the parish to which he is presented : In opposition to those, who asserted the right of a presentee to be admitted to the benefice, if he is chargeable with no literary or moral disqualification, whether he has, or has not, the concurrence of heritors or elders.

He lived to see many modifications introduced on this subject, in the doctrines, both of his friends, and of his opponents. But his general opinions remained unchanged ; and whether they were well or ill founded, he thought he saw strong reasons to confirm them, in the effects produced on the state of the country, which he imagined

to have been the result of the opposite system.*

It is scarcely necessary to add, that, in the public institutions of Edinburgh, wherever he thought he could be useful, he was at all times a steady and active associate. He was ready to give both his labour and his time; and uniformly exerted himself to promote, what he considered as the essential interests of the institutions. Though, like other men, he might sometimes mistake the measures which he recommended or supported, he was universally understood to be guided by the purest motives, and never, on any occasion, to be swayed by private or personal considerations.

The mistakes of such a man (and from such mistakes as could be imputed to him, no individual is exempted) have no effects in public life, compared with the influence of his zeal and purity, in every practicable good work, within his sphere of activity.

* For the doctrine on both sides of this question, see Appendix, No. I.

It was always astonishing to those, who were acquainted with his professional labours, and with his habits of study, that he was able to devote so large a portion of his time, as he did, to the management of public institutions. But his sense of duty, joined to the natural activity of his mind, enabled him to surmount every difficulty; and though he had a very slender constitution of body, he preserved both his health and his activity, to a very late period of life.

His health had certainly begun to give way, even before the death of his venerable colleague Dr Robertson; and he alluded to this fact, in his sermon on that occasion. After that time, he was obliged to relinquish many of the active pursuits, in which he had, till then, most zealously distinguished himself. He continued, however, to officiate, almost regularly, in his church, for four or five years longer; and even later, as frequently as the visible progress of his decline would permit. The last sermon which he

delivered in public, was preached only a few months before his death.*

But the life of this valuable man was now approaching to its close. His uniform regularity and temperance had hitherto protected him, from the most common diseases incident to the human frame. He had enjoyed good health, with few interruptions, during seventy years. After that time, his decline was slowly but sensibly advancing. The rheumatic affections, under which he suffered so much at last, from pain and debility, were less the symptoms of any regular or formed disease, than of exhausted organs, which could no longer perform their usual functions.

His intellectual faculties were, to the last hours of his life, in their full vigour. Even when pain and weakness had rendered it difficult for him, to move from his chair without assistance, he was both eager and assiduous still, in his literary pursuits. When

* His sermon on Infant Baptism, published in the second volume of his printed Discourses.

he had scarcely the power of changing his position, he continued to read and write, with his usual ardour. He was even speculating, within a few weeks of his death, on a new publication, and on an important subject, which he had never before discussed.

When a friend was urging him to arrange his sermons for publication, he evaded his solicitations, by telling him, that he had something material to write on the evidence of Christianity, which (he thought) had not before been said, and which appeared to him, to be of more importance than his sermons. He did not mention any circumstance, which could have pointed out the idea which was in his mind. It was impossible to urge him on such a subject ; and whatever his idea was, it is now lost for ever.

But his faculties were so entire, and such was his literary perseverance to the end, that on the very night before he died, and within a few hours of his decease, he was eagerly employed in reading a new Dutch book, of which the leaves had been till then

uncut. His family observed the first symptom of his immediate dissolution, when he complained that evening, that he did not see to read distinctly, and with some impatience asked for more candles. He had never used spectacles; and, till that moment, his sight had never failed.

This latest effort in his studies, is the last incident to be related, of his ardent and honourable life.

He went to bed about eleven o'clock; and by two o'clock in the morning, his bodily organs were at rest for ever, and his pure and active spirit was with God.

He died on the 19th day of January 1803, in the eighty-second year of his age.

He had a numerous family, of nine sons and five daughters. Of these, only his youngest son David, who inherits his estate of Carnock, and three daughters, survived him. His eldest son, John, was a distinguished officer on the Bengal establishment, and many years before his father's death, was killed in action, at the head of his company. Two of his younger sons also died in India;

and another died in Madeira, where he had gone for the recovery of his health. He had four sons besides, and one daughter, who died in their infancy.

His eldest daughter, Mary, married Dr Charles Stuart of Dunearn, by whom she became the mother of ten children, of whom five have survived her. She died a few months ago.

His second daughter, Margaret, died very suddenly, a few years before himself, to the inexpressible grief of his whole family.*

His two remaining daughters, Ann and Christian, are still alive and unmarried.

Mrs Erskine survived her husband ; and Providence gave his family the advantage and consolation of her society, for five years after his death.

* The deep impression which this event made on her father, he has himself recorded, in his Supplement to Dr Gillies's Historical Collections, published in 1796, where he describes her, as " his affectionate daughter, and for many years his agreeable companion—whom, from his knowledge of her cultivated understanding and delicate taste, he was accustomed to consult as his wise and faithful, though modest and reluctant, counsellor,"—a precious and interesting memorial from the pen of such a father !—Supplement to Historical Collections, p. 89.

The character of Dr Erskine, as a man and as a minister, as a son, as a father, and as a friend, as a man of letters, and as an author, is so distinctly marked in the different parts of the preceding narrative, that it is scarcely possible to place it in a more striking light, by any general estimate or description.

Two sermons were preached in the Old Grey Friars Church, on the Sunday immediately after his death, the one by Dr Davidson, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, who had long lived in the most intimate habits with him, and to whom he bequeathed the property of all his papers and manuscripts : and the other by Dr Inglis, his respectable colleague, who had officiated along with him in the same church, during the last years of his life.

The character, given of him in each of these sermons, was published at that time, and a few extracts from both will be found in the Appendix. *

What such men have done so well, ought

* Appendix, No. II.

perhaps to supersede any addition which can be made to it in this narrative.

It must be evident to every one, who attends to the leading facts in the preceding pages, that the habits of personal religion, and a constant solicitude to promote the interests of Christianity, as far as his influence or his opportunities extended, form the leading features in the history of Dr Erskine's life.

He had originally selected his profession as a minister of the gospel, from this single consideration, that he connected with it the most extensive sphere of usefulness to the Church of Christ, and to mankind, which could be given to him ; or to which he conceived his peculiar talents to be adapted. There is as little reason to doubt, that he formed a sound judgment of his own character, as that he steadily followed out the principle which at first determined him. During the whole course of his ministry, he seemed to make every part of his conduct—of his personal habits—of his time—of his public activity—and of his literary

pursuits, to bear directly and constantly, on his public or professional usefulness, in the service of the gospel, as the great object of his life.

His indefatigable industry in preaching ; in his pastoral duties, among the ignorant and the sick ; in the acquisition, or the application of ancient or modern languages ; in his literary researches, or in his familiar correspondence ; in the business of Ecclesiastical Courts, or of public institutions—was, in all its various forms and aspects, the perpetual instrument of his zeal and sincerity, in the service of practical Christianity.

In the private exercise of his pastoral functions, he was as indefatigable among the lowest of the people entrusted to him, and in the minutest services which he could render them, as in the most conspicuous efforts of his literature and talents. No matter what their situations were, or what the service was, which they required of him, if he only saw that he had the means of being useful to them, (to instruct, to admonish, or to

console them,) he spared neither his labour nor his time, during any period of his active life.

The preceding narrative has demonstrated, that his usefulness, and especially his usefulness in the immediate service of religion, was the leading object of whatever he wrote for the press. His political pamphlets on the American controversy, though, at first view, they seem to have had a different object, were all directed to the same end, and dictated by the same principle. He had always been sanguine in his expectations, from the progress of religion in North America ; and, as has been related, took a deep and an affectionate interest in individuals and in families, with whom he had been long accustomed to connect its prosperity. When he wrote to deprecate the commencement of the war, or afterwards to plead for terms of conciliation, which, in his apprehension, would have preserved the colonies to the mother country, he believed that he was arguing for the cause of religion, of so much importance to both countries, as

much as he pleaded the cause of political expediency.

Even when he employed his time on small publications, which his friends imagined might have been more extensively useful, if it had been occupied on larger works, he was governed by the same great principle which influenced him in every thing besides. The *small* service which *he* could perform, and which others *might* neglect; which could be conveyed directly to the cottage of the poor, to the chamber of the afflicted, or to the bed of the dying; seemed always to him a more urgent duty, than the most profound speculations of theological research, which would have contributed more to the stock of human knowledge, and much more to his own literary character.

If we regret the want of what he might have added to the learning and theology of his time, we cannot but applaud the spirit which preferred what, though a humbler, he regarded as a more immediate,

and a more useful service to the church of Christ.

He had from nature a considerable portion of the same keenness of temper, which was remarked in his grandfather ; which, when it is not under the perpetual control of habit and principle, is so apt to embitter the competitions, and to diminish the comforts of human society. In him it was so much under his self-command, that it served only in public life, to add to the fertility of his resources, and to the activity of his mind. Eager to do his duty in its full extent, he lost sight of nothing which he imagined would be subservient to it ; and was not to be diverted from his purpose, either by opposition or by difficulties, as long as he considered the object which he aimed at, to be either worthy of his exertions, or attainable by his activity.

On the other hand, if at any time he had expressed himself in public debate, with the least degree of warmth, beyond what his subject seemed to have required, he was always the first to perceive and ac-

knowledge it ; and was often forward to moderate or retract what, on reflection, appeared to himself, to have been either a keen, or an uncautious, expression, though it had neither been observed by his friends nor his opponents. He was never satisfied to leave anything unexplained, which seemed, at the moment, to be either capable of being misinterpreted, or of giving the slightest degree of umbrage to any individual.

The same observations apply to his intercourse in private life.

He could certainly be warm when the occasion required it, and more frequently was so perhaps, in the defence of those whom he regarded with the partiality of a friend, than in any other circumstances. But his utmost keenness was always under the control of his general habits,* equally removed from the passions and asperities of the world.

His conversation, both in his own family,

* See Note BB.

and in more general society, was in the highest degree interesting and delightful. There was a perpetual mildness and benignity in his aspect—a cheerfulness and kindness in his voice and manner—an extent of information, and a variety of entertainment in his conversation ; which was often enriched by an animation and pleasantry, in which the youngest of his associates could seldom surpass him. It could be truly said of him, in the language of the apostle, that “ his speech was always with “ grace, seasoned with salt.”

The steadiness of his private attachments ought not to be forgotten. They were not rashly formed ; and they were always built on his persuasion of the moral and religious worth of the individuals. But he was immovable in adhering to them ; and neither distance of place, nor of time, had any effect to lessen their hold of him. The confidence which he had given to the fathers, frequently descended to the children ; and the estimable qualities on which his attachments had been originally formed, were

often brought forward, with every expression of interest and tenderness.

His domestic life, divided between his family duties and his private studies, was uniformly distinguished by the visible order and tranquillity, and by the cheerful and affectionate manners, on which all domestic happiness depends; by the intimate union and affection of his domestic society; by the good sense and sound discretion, which everywhere appeared in his domestic arrangements; and, above all, by the charm of “simplicity and godly sincerity,” which the visible habits of the most unostentatious piety gave to every circumstance, in the intercourse of his family.

THE LIFE OF DOCTOR ERSKINE, from his birth to his grave; as he was seen, in his early, and in his latest years—in the vigour of his faculties, and in his last decline—in his pastoral functions, and in his literary researches—in his active pursuits, and in his private intercourse—in the friendships of his youth, and of his age—and in every view of his domestic habits; entitles

his name to be transmitted to posterity, with the most estimable and venerable characters of his time ; and with a distinction, to which no external rank or honour could have added anything.

*Hinc tua me virtus rapit, et miranda per omnes
Vita modos ; quod, si deesset tibi forte creato
Nobilitas, eadem pro nobilitate fuisset.*

LUCAN.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

IN adverting to the leading events in Dr Erskine's life, there is one subject, which has been left untouched, of which the author wishes to give some idea, for the sake of those, who have not much acquaintance with the constitution or history of the Scottish Church.

Every minister of the Established Church has his individual share, in the ecclesiastical government of Scotland; and, as has been related, Dr Erskine was, at no period of his life, either an inactive or an inefficient member, of the Church Courts. But, to convey any general view of this department of his public duty, it is necessary to give an outline of the ecclesiastical constitution of Scotland, and a slight sketch of some of the more recent periods of its Church history.

By the "Act for securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government," which is incorporated with the Treaty of Union, and declared to be a fundamental article and condition thereof, it is "provided and declared, that the true Protestant religion, contained in the Confession of Faith, with the form and purity of worship *then* in use within the Church of Scotland, and its presbyterian church government and discipline, that is to say, the government of the church, by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies, all established by the acts of parliament *before referred to*, pursuant to the Claim of Right, *shall remain and continue unalterable; and that the said Presbyterian government shall be the only government of the church*

within the kingdom of Scotland."* Under this constitution, every parish has a kirk-session, consisting of the parish minister or ministers, and of so many elders, selected from the most respectable inhabitants of the parish, who are solemnly ordained to their office in presence of the congregation, according to established laws. The number of elders is not limited. It cannot be less than two to constitute a kirk-session, in the smallest parishes; and should, in general, be proportioned to the extent and population of each parish. When vacancies occur in the eldership, they are supplied by other respectable individuals, elected by the minister and elders who survive. If, when a vacancy occurs, the kirk session does not then consist of three to make a quorum, the presbytery of the district has the power to appoint two or more of their own number, to be associated with the minister or ministers of the parish, in filling up the vacancies, so as to restore the kirk-session to its legal functions.

To the kirk-session is entrusted the ordinary management of the parochial poor, the application of the weekly collections, made at the church for their benefit, and of any voluntary donations which they receive in aid of the weekly collections. When these funds are not sufficient to provide for the poor, a joint meeting of the heritors and kirk session is empowered, and required, by act of Parliament, to assess the parish, in order to make up the deficiency; the one half of the assessment being raised from the landlords, and the other from the tenants. It should be mentioned, at the same time, that the kirk-session is entitled to retain in their own hands, the one half of the collections made at the church, to defray the expence of the clerks and officers of the inferior ecclesiastical courts, and to meet the demands for occasional charities, not included in the ordinary manage-

* Some attempts have lately been made to hold out to the public what is called "*An Episcopal Church of Scotland.*" Whatever indulgence may be due to *Episcopal Dissenters*, (and the Established Church has given sufficient countenance to the indulgence they have received,) it is not to be forgotten, that *such a designation is an unwarrantable and illegal assumption, directly opposed to the fundamental laws of the land, and to the unalterable conditions of the Treaty of Union.*

ment of the poor. It is not immaterial to mention these particulars, either as they bring to view a considerable department of parochial labour, or as they contain the substance of the Scottish laws relating to the poor. And it deserves to be added, that, though the latest of those laws is as old as the time of William and Mary, there was scarcely any regular assessment for the poor, which was continued for any length of time, in any parish of Scotland, before the year 1755. As long as there was no secession of Presbyterians from the Established Church, the weekly collections, under the management of the kirk-sessions, were in general found sufficient for the maintenance of the poor. In some years of peculiar hardship or scarcity, such as the four last years of the seventeenth century, or the year 1740, voluntary assistance was no doubt given, and in some instances temporary assessments were resorted to, to enable the kirk-sessions to meet such unusual emergencies. But on all ordinary occasions, the resources of the kirk-sessions were considered as sufficient; and continued to be so, at least as late as 1755.

Besides the case of the poor, the kirk-session has a general inspection of the morals of the parishioners, and a right to administer the discipline of the Church, according to established laws. To the effect of ecclesiastical censures, it has the power to institute processes, to cite parties and witnesses, to examine witnesses on oath, and to pronounce sentences, and inflict censures, according to the evidence adduced. But both its citations and its sentences depend on ecclesiastical authority alone, and seldom either receive or require any assistance from the civil power.

The proceedings of a kirk-session are matter of record; and the record is regularly kept, so as to be preserved or extracted for the benefit of the parties, or for the information or the inspection of the Courts of Review. Every proceeding or sentence of a kirk-session is subject to the review of the presbytery of the district; and can be brought there, either by a reference made by the kirk-session itself, by a complaint at the instance of any member of the court who may be dissatisfied, or by an appeal from the parties who may think themselves

aggrieved. If any striking irregularity, or any real injury can be substantiated, the control of the presbytery is always sufficient to correct or redress it. But the usual management of the kirk-sessions is favourable to all the best interests of the parishioners ; and *comparatively* few instances occur, in which it becomes a just subject either of complaint or remonstrance.

The presbytery is the court immediately above the kirk-session. A presbytery consists of the ministers of so many contiguous parishes, who are *ex officio* members, and of an elder from each kirk-session within the district, who, by the present usage, is elected at the end of every six months. The presbytery, besides being a Court of Review, to affirm, reverse, or alter the sentences of kirk-sessions, when regularly brought before it, or to direct or advise them with regard to any part of their proceedings, has a radical jurisdiction of its own, both ecclesiastical and civil. It has the immediate superintendence of the private conduct, as well as of the professional labours, of the clergy of the district, who are not amenable to the kirk-sessions. It has the power to admonish, to censure, and even to deprive them, according to the established laws, and upon evidence regularly taken. The induction of presentees to benefices belongs exclusively to presbyteries. All presentations to benefices must be directed to the presbyteries, in whom the original right is vested, to take trial of the qualifications of presentees,* to give them induction if they are found qualified ; and, if they want the necessary qualifications, to reject them. Besides this security against the introduction of unqualified men, no individual can be presented to a benefice till he has, in the first instance, been licensed to preach by a presbytery, after due trial of his qualifications. At the same time, the trial prescribed for a license does not supersede the second trial of qualifications required, when the same individual is presented to a benefice. The trial and induction of schoolmasters † is, in like manner, entrusted to the presbyteries ; and there are many other subjects which fall under their cognizance, which it is not necessary to specify particularly.

* See Note CC.

† See Note DD.

In general, their jurisdiction extends to every thing in which the edification or the morals of the people, the conduct of their parochial instructors, or the discipline of the church, is concerned. The sentences and proceedings of the presbytery, which, like the kirk-session, is always a court of record, are subject to the review of the immediately superior court, the synod, before which they can be brought (as those of the kirk-session before the presbytery) by reference, complaint, or appeal; and there they may be affirmed, reversed, or altered. The presbytery has besides a civil jurisdiction, in questions which relate to ecclesiastical benefices, to the designation or exchange of parochial glebes, to the building or repairing of churches or manses, * (parsonage-houses,) and in a few other cases. But in all such civil questions, an appeal is competent from their decisions, in the form of a suspension or advocation, not to the Superior Ecclesiastical Courts, but to the Court of Session. The forms of proceeding in the presbytery are prescribed by statute, or are ascertained by use and precedent.

The synod is the court of review immediately above the presbytery, and consists of all the ministers and elders who stand on the roll, as constituent members, of so many contiguous presbyteries, which are placed under its provincial jurisdiction. Its meetings are generally held *twice*, though in some remote districts only *once*, in every year.

Every ecclesiastical question, which has been under the consideration of a presbytery, within the provincial district, may be competently brought under the review of the synod, in the manner already explained, with regard to the review of the sentences of kirk sessions by the presbyteries.

The synod has, besides, an original jurisdiction, as well on subjects of general interest, as with regard to the conduct of its own members, and can both give authoritative directions to the presbyteries, and originate propositions to the General Assembly, on any subject which seems to require its influence or authority. On the other hand, every judgment of a synod, as an interior court,

* See Note EE.

may be brought under the review of the General Assembly by reference, complaint, or appeal. But in every question, not carried to the Courts of Review, the judgment of the presbytery or synod (if they have not gone beyond their jurisdiction) is final; and is as completely authoritative, as the sentences of the Supreme Court.

The General Assembly is the supreme Ecclesiastical Court. It consists of delegates from every presbytery, university, and royal burgh, in Scotland. It has the countenance of a representative of the king, styled the Lord High Commissioner, who is always a nobleman; and holding its meeting annually, and (according to the present practice) in the month of May, it usually continues to sit for twelve days.

In its *judicial* capacity, as a Court of Review, and as the Court of last Resort, the General Assembly has a right to determine finally every question brought from the inferior courts, by reference, complaint, or appeal. And it possesses, besides, such a general superintendence of the discipline of the Church, of the management of the inferior courts, of the conduct of the clergy, and of the morals of the people, that it has authority to go beyond the record in any particular case; to redress a wrong which appears to have been done, or to apply the church discipline, which has either been neglected by the inferior courts, or which the circumstances of the case appear to require. But to do this regularly, the parties interested must be legally cited, if they are not before at the bar. In these general views of its judicative capacity, the authority vested in the General Assembly, is of equal importance to the prosperity of the kingdom, to the permanent interests of religion, and to the usefulness and respectability of the clergy.

The *legislative* authority of the General Assembly has as extensive effects, as its *judicial* functions. It has the power of enacting statutes, with regard to every subject of ecclesiastical cognizance; which are equally binding, as permanent laws, on the Assembly itself, on the inferior courts, and on the individual members of the Church. But the power of legislation is not committed to the General Assembly, without limitation. By an act of Assembly in 1697, (which was not passed into a law,

till it had been transmitted to the several presbyteries, and had received their sanction, and which, from its substance and design, has obtained the name of the **Barrier Act**,) every proposition for a new law, must first be considered in the form of an overture, either originating in the Assembly itself, or suggested to the Assembly by the inferior judicatures. Though it should be approved of by the Assembly, it cannot be enacted into a statute, till it has been first transmitted to the several presbyteries of the church, for their consideration, and has received the sanction of, at least, a majority of the presbyteries. The laws which are enacted by the Assembly, after receiving this sanction, are the established and permanent statutes of the church, by which every thing belonging to the ecclesiastical state, or to the church courts, is authoritatively regulated.*

It is unnecessary to be more minute. This general view of the constitution, which is perfectly familiar to those who have attended to the subject, is inserted here, not only to shew the share which every individual minister must of necessity take, in the government and discipline of the church, as a member of each of the Ecclesiastical Courts, but to explain to those who may read this narrative, and have less access to be well informed, the practical extent and efficiency of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Scotland, as applied both to the clergy and the people.†

The statute, as well as the common law of the church, is sufficiently comprehensive and definite, and the Courts of Review are sufficiently accessible, to secure the general ends, both of justice and edification; while the different jurisdictions to which every case may be

* It should have been mentioned in this detail, that, to secure the purity of management in the inferior courts, the presbyteries are required to send up their records to be revised by the synod, at every meeting of the synod; and that every synod is bound to send up its records, for revisal, by the Assembly, every year. By this provision, effectual means are afforded to correct the errors of the inferior courts, when they occur, the authority of the synods in the first instance, and of the Assembly in the last resort, being always imperative on the courts below.

† See Note FF.

submitted, ought to afford as much security, as the present condition of human affairs will admit of, both against private intrigue and local prejudices. The Church Courts are no doubt liable to the defects, which are in a certain degree inseparable from all numerous and public assemblies; in which all the members have the same voice, with very different degrees, both of public spirit, and general information; in which superior talents or address have frequently so much more influence, than dispassionate judgment; and in which individuals are so apt to mistake sudden impressions, for deliberate conviction. The publicity of the courts, which, with the exception of the kirk sessions, are open to spectators from every class of the people, united to the responsibility of the individuals at home, affords no inconsiderable securities, against these most obvious defects of popular assemblies. Every man's voice is recognized by the public; and every individual is conscious, that, on all subjects of general interest, the public have a right to estimate, and to question his conduct.

If there were no party or political influence to operate in the Ecclesiastical Courts, though they would often err, they would always find the means of correcting their own mistakes, or of guarding themselves and their successors against the repetition of them. Neither the condition of our nature, nor the truth of history, will permit us to imagine, that such a state of things has ever been completely realized. There is probably no period in the Ecclesiastical History of Scotland, or, indeed, of any other country, in which party or political considerations have had no degree of influence. On the other hand, though their effects have been more visible in some countries, and in some periods, than in others; it may certainly be affirmed without exaggeration, that, as many examples can be quoted from the Ecclesiastical Courts of Scotland, of a disinterested and independent zeal for the advancement of religion, and for the general interests and safety of the church, and of the community, as can be produced from any other numerous and permanent associations of mankind. But it must not be dissembled, that those courts have

been at all times more or less exposed to an influence of a different kind ; operating in various forms at different periods, and producing effects, more or less hostile, to the general design of a religious establishment.

At the time of the Reformation, the nobility and gentry of Scotland were at the head of the reformers ; and though the reformed clergy had certainly great influence, the landholders, at first, and ultimately the crown, never lost sight of the power, which they intended to reserve to themselves.

When the Presbyterian government was established, from its very commencement there were individuals, both among the clergy and the laity, who laboured to embarrass or paralyze the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Courts, from views of personal aggrandisement, or from political intrigue, under the secret or avowed influence of the crown. After the convulsions occasioned by so great a change on the condition of the country, as the Reformation produced, had completely subsided, the contention still subsisted, between those who conscientiously supported the liberties of the church, and what they considered as its fundamental laws, and those who laboured to subject both the clergy and the church, not to the laws of the country, but to an abject subserviency, to the designs of the Court, or to the will of the Sovereign. Before the accession of James VI. to the Crown of England, his influence in the General Assemblies, supported by private intrigue, as well as by the exertions of direct authority, was frequently defeated, though it was often successful. His versatile politics sometimes yielded to the storm, which he himself had raised ; and while he courted those, whom he considered as his opponents in the Church, with the most flattering attentions, to gain his purpose, he did not scruple to make public declarations, in favour of the Presbyterian government, as the most perfect model of the Christian Church. At other times, chagrined by opposition, and trusting less to his address than to his authority, he attempted to bend the ecclesiastical state to his arbitrary will, by the iron rod of power. Though the measures which he pursued were as uncer-

tain and changeable, as the impressions of a weak mind will always be, which are guided, neither by sound judgment nor real principle, his object was invariably the same—to subjugate every individual in the Church and in the State, to his own capricious mandates; and, if it had been possible, to allow no influence but his own, to operate in the affairs of either.

At the moment of his accession to the crown of England, he flattered, indeed, with almost abject servility, those in Scotland whom he had oppressed, and imprisoned, and punished before; and whom he persecuted as severely afterwards; that he might have their influence to secure the quiet of his own country in his absence; uncertain, as he then was, of his reception among his new subjects, to whom he was yet a stranger.

But he threw off the mask entirely, as soon as he found himself established in England, and allowed the inveterate hostility, which he had long secretly cherished against the Presbyterian Church, to break out without restraint or disguise.* The notable maxim, of which he was the author,—“No bishop, no king,”—was the result of the opposition, which had been given to his duplicity and tyranny, by the Scotch Presbyterians. And nothing contributed so much to prevent his arbitrary doctrines, civil and religious, from achieving much more than they did, as the undoubting confidence with which he had taught himself to contemplate them. They appeared to him, as so many self-evident or incontrovertible propositions, which required no more to establish them, than the confidence and authority with which he announced them. And his reliance on his own sagacity, went far to save his dominions during *his* life, from the effects of his most pernicious doctrines. But his folly and bigotry laid the foundation of political delusions,

* His treatment of Andrew Melville, the most distinguished individual among the Scottish Clergymen of his time, whom he had seduced to come to London, under the most specious pretences, and whom he afterwards, for reasons the most frivolous and contemptible, first imprisoned in the Tower, and ultimately compelled to seek a refuge at Sedan, for the rest of his life, is an everlasting monument of his unprincipled tyranny.

which ultimately plunged his dominions in anarchy and blood, and ended in the ruin of his family.

It is not necessary for the purposes of this sketch, to enter into the history of James's proceedings in Scotland; to represent the successive and arbitrary innovations, by which he attempted to assimilate the constitution and worship in Scotland, to the forms of the English Church; to compel the people to embrace them, and, if possible, to annihilate the Presbyterian establishment. With all the arbitrary authority which he employed, his successor was far from finding his work completed. In renewing the attempt to impose the English ceremonies, in 1637, Charles I. produced such a convulsion in the country, "that all the acts of Assembly, since the accession of James to the crown of England, were, upon pretty reasonable grounds, afterwards declared null and invalid. The acts of parliament which affected ecclesiastical affairs, were supposed, on that very account, to have no manner of authority. And thus, Episcopacy, the High Commission, the Articles of Perth, the Canons, and the Liturgy, were abolished, and declared unlawful; and the whole fabric, which James and Charles, in a long course of years, had been rearing with so much care and policy, fell at once to the ground." * The Presbyterian discipline and government were from this time established; and in this state the Scottish Church remained till after the Restoration.

The establishment of Episcopacy in Scotland, after the Restoration, though it was equally adverse to the inclinations of the people, and to their habits and opinions; and though it gave the crown much greater facilities than it had before possessed, to render its influence predominant in the church; did not practically make so great a change in the ecclesiastical government or usages, as has often been ignorantly affirmed. The public worship was still the same. Excepting the King's chapel, and a single parish church in the country, in which it was for a year or two in use, † the Service-

* Hume's History, Vol. VI. p. 371. Quarto edition.

† Salton, while Bishop Burnet was minister of that parish.

book and Liturgy of England never became the usage of Scotland; and the Presbyterian form of worship was universally adhered to. The parochial duties of the clergy were still understood to be what they had been before, though they were certainly discharged with less punctuality or strictness. The inferior Ecclesiastical Courts still subsisted, with almost no other change in their forms of proceeding, than that the bishop presided, as often as he was present, in place of a moderator chosen by the members; and that the clergy received ordination and institution from the bishop, in place of the presbytery. The old Presbyterian discipline was still in use; and in the records of the kirk-sessions and presbyteries of that time, many of which are still preserved, it is not easy to perceive any very material difference in their proceedings, from the Presbyterian practice in the following century.

Had there been any moderation in the management, or any portion, either of judgment or humanity, in those who were employed; or had the new clergy in general possessed either talents or character, it is difficult to say what the event might have been. But violence and tyranny were the only instruments resorted to, by those who were at the head of the government. The bishops and the clergy, with the exception of a few individuals, became the abject tools of a persecution, as unprincipled and detestable, as any thing which either tyranny or fanaticism has left on record: A persecution, notwithstanding all that has been said to palliate or defend it, so atrocious, that Archbishop Leighton (a man who would have done honour to any church in the world) declared, that he would not have been concerned in it, to have planted Christianity itself.* When the Presbyterian ministers were ejected, their successors, their inferiors by many degrees, both in respectability and learning, † were universally obnoxious to the people;

* Burnet's History of his own Times, Vol. I. p. 213. Folio edition.

† Burnet says of them, "They were generally very mean and despicable in all respects. They were the worst preachers I ever heard. They were ignorant to a reproach. Many of them were openly vicious. They were a disgrace to their orders, and the

while the tyranny, and even the ferocity with which the influence of government, which then became irresistible, was directed against the Presbyterians, are scarcely surpassed by any thing to be found in the annals of the most barbarous nations.

The Revolution of 1688 restored the Presbyterian discipline and government. If it could not redress the injuries of the preceding reigns, to the individuals who had suffered so severely, it has at least compensated them to the country, by the solid advantages, which, for nearly 130 years, have been received from the Presbyterian Church.

The Ecclesiastical Courts have ever since subsisted, according to the forms of the constitution, which has already been explained. While every parochial minister has his share in the administration, both of the Supreme and inferior Courts, it is obvious, that many of the subjects which fall under their jurisdiction, have such an intimate connection with the civil government, that it may be naturally supposed to be at all times an object to those who preside in his Majesty's Council, to bring the influence of the Crown to bear on the decisions of the Church.

During the reign of King William, and the first part of Queen Anne's reign, there was so much confidence placed in the ministers of state whom they employed, and the great body of the Scotch clergy were so thoroughly attached to the principles of the Revolution of 1688, that, excepting the peculiar views and usages of the Presbyterian Church, there was not much which the government could ask, which they were not willing to concede; nor, setting aside occasional differences of opinion, where there was evidently room for them, such as will always occur in numerous assemblies, were there many subjects of contention among themselves. There was still a pretender to the throne, in a situation to be formidable, whom they regarded as equally an

“sacred functions, and were indeed the dregs and refuse of the
“northern parts. Those of them who rose above contempt or
“scandal, were men of such violent tempers, that they were as
“much hated as the others were despised.” Burnet, Vol. I. p. 158.
Folio edition. See, on this subject, Wodrow, Vol. I. p. 158, 159.

enemy to their church and to their liberties, and as an enemy to the Protestant religion in every form. This circumstance, added to the zeal, good sense, and moderation of the government, was no uncertain security, for the general disposition of the Presbyterian clergy, in all ordinary cases, to accede to the wishes of the crown. The truth is, there were few occasions at this time, in which the government interfered with their deliberations; though many insidious attempts were made to give King William a prejudice against their principles; and, by artful misrepresentations, on the other hand, to draw them into an opposition to his measures. But their general loyalty to government was beyond all suspicion; and, with few exceptions indeed, was uniformly repaid by the confidence of the ministers of the crown.*

When the great question relating to the Union with England occurred in 1706-7, and the act of security was conceded to the Scottish Church, and was declared to be unalterable, as a fundamental condition of the union; the prudence and moderation of those of the clergy who had a leading influence in the Ecclesiastical Judicatories, is mentioned by the best informed historians, as a principal instrument of bridling the popular violence against the treaty with England, (at that time extremely offensive to a great body of the people,) and of facilitating its progress and termination.†

During all the period from 1690 to 1712, the chief, or most important, deliberations in the General Assemblies, turned on objects of internal regulation. It was, in particular, a principal object, to provide Presbyterian ministers for the remote districts, which were most in want of them; and till this could be done, to supply the vacant parishes in the mean time, by means of individuals sent from the southern counties, who, at intervals, officiated in succession for a limited period. There were but sixty of the old Presbyterian ministers, who had been ejected at the Restoration, who were alive

* See a remarkable example in the Life of Principal Carstares, from p. 57 to p. 64.

† Somerville's History of Q. Anne, Ch. x. p. 225, 226.

at the Revolution. Many of the Episcopal Clergy acquiesced in the new establishment, and, under the provisions of an act of parliament, were received into the church. The Presbyterians in the several districts were authorized to receive them, according to the terms prescribed in the act. Young men were gradually coming forward to supply the vacant churches: but it required all the attention and vigilance of the Assembly, to make the arrangements requisite for the different quarters of the country, so as not only to provide for the immediate necessities of the parishes vacant, but to look forward steadily to the time, when fixed incumbents could be given to them all.

There was another object of internal arrangement which, at this period, engrossed a great part of the Assembly's attention,—the establishment of parochial schools, in terms of the acts of parliament 1693 and 1696; an institution, which, in many of its features, is peculiar to Scotland, and has most materially added to the resources of every order of men in the kingdom.*

An unbiassed reader, who dispassionately examines the proceedings of the General Assemblies, from 1690 to 1712, cannot but perceive the sincerity with which the great body of the clergy then united to promote the religious interests of the people, and the general tranquillity of the country; as well as the uniform attachment shewn by them all, to the principles which placed William and Mary on the throne, and the usefulness and respectability of the Presbyterian Church. There were occasional differences of opinion among them, such as occur in all numerous assemblies. But, though we must suppose the influence of government to have been at all times considerable, there do not appear, in the General

* The General Assemblies had, long before the Restoration, kept steadily in view, the education of the people in parochial schools. But, till after the Revolution, they had never been able to procure an efficient law on the subject, or to establish any regular system. The regulations laid down in 1645 and 1649, might have had a considerable effect, if they had not been rendered abortive, by the political convulsions of the times. But it is undoubtedly to the Revolution, that Scotland is indebted for parish schools; one of the most important advantages which it enjoys.

Assemblies of this period, any settled combinations, or indeed any offensive symptoms, either of party spirit, or of political intrigue.

Their views of some questions were certainly neither liberal nor enlightened. On the subject of religious toleration in particular, all their experience of the persecuting and intolerant spirit of the government before the Revolution, had not been sufficient to correct, or even to moderate, their own bigotry. It required a considerable degree of management on the part of King William's administration, to prevent their narrow prejudices, which had rather been irritated than softened by what they had suffered before, from operating to the disadvantage of the country, and the disgrace of the church. The King neither countenanced nor connived at any species of religious oppression; and on this occasion, he endeavoured, by mild and conciliatory measures, to discourage and restrain the intolerance of the clergy. In that age, it was not in his power to extirpate it; and the commission of the General Assembly addressed the crown against the toleration of dissenters, as late as the year 1703. But at least, the management of King William kept the spirit of intolerance in check, and prevented it from operating to the prejudice of the country; leaving to the influence of a system of equal and temperate law, and to the gradual progress of information, the final extirpation of errors, so unworthy of the cause of religion, and so hostile to the true interests of every government. The clergy had indeed a pretence for their intolerance, in the intrigues to overturn their establishment, as well as in the disaffection to the King's authority, and to the Revolution itself, which were then imputed to the Episcopalian Dissenters.* But undoubtedly, its chief source is to be referred to the narrowness and bigotry of their own system, added to their remembrance of the persecutions, from which they had been so lately released.

There were besides at this time some scruples, not about the *substance*, but about the *terms*, of the oaths of

* Carstares's State Papers, p. 288. The Episcopal meetings of Edinburgh are there styled "nests of disaffection." Somerville's King William, p. 469.

assurance and abjuration, required under the Revolution settlement, which gave some advantage to their adversaries, and at first created much embarrassment to the King's ministers. But this difficulty was easily surmounted, when their scruples were clearly seen to be entirely conscientious, and to have no tincture of disaffection. The moderation of the King, and of those whose advice he followed, united to the real integrity of those whose scruples they respected, prevented the querulousness of the clergy on this subject from producing any serious consequences, with regard to the condition either of the church or of the country. Indeed, the mild and conciliatory treatment which they received from the King on this occasion, added greatly to the affection and confidence, with which they regarded his person and government.*

But leaving this digression, it is of more importance to advert to a subject which then occupied much of the attention of General Assemblies; and which, during the course of the last century, became the great source of division and intrigue, both in the Ecclesiastical Courts, and among the people at large.

It arose out of the rules adopted, at different times, by the state or by the church, for the settlement, or induction of the parochial clergy.

It is well known, that the idea of patronage, or the right of presenting to church benefices, took its rise from the canon law, which, even before the Reformation, was never completely established in Scotland. In the second book of discipline, adopted in 1578, and recorded in 1581, the General Assembly declared, "that patronages and presentations to benefices have flowed from the Pope, and corruption of the canon law only, in so far as thereby any person was intruded, or placed over kirks, having *curam animarum*;" and at the same time claimed, that in Scotland "none should be intruded upon any congregation, either by the prince or any inferior person, without lawful election, and the assent of the people, over whom the person is pla-

* See Life of Carstares, prefixed to his State Papers, p. 57, connected with p. 61.

“ced.”* This was unquestionably the doctrine of the church.

On the other hand, it is equally clear, that neither James VI. nor any of his successors before the Revolution, were willing to abolish the right of patronage. The acts of parliament are authoritative and explicit, in enforcing this right: But, at the same time, they contain clauses of restriction, by which it was evidently intended to be limited. The act of 1592 gives the patron a right to retain the fruits of the benefice, if his presentee shall not be inducted by the Presbytery, unless he shall be found unqualified. But it leaves in full force the act of 1567, which provides, that if a Presbytery shall refuse to admit a qualified presentee, there shall lie an appeal from them to “the ministers of the province,” that is, to the Synod, and if the Synod shall refuse, that it shall then be competent to appeal to the General Assembly, “by whom the cause being decided, (the enactment expressly bears, that) it shall take end, as *they* shall decern and declare.”

They who have contended for the unlimited right of patronage affirm, that, under these acts of parliament, the patron is entitled to retain the fruits of the benefice, in every instance, in which the Church Courts refuse the induction of a presentee, who is a licentiate of the church, or any other grounds, than his deficiency in moral or literary qualifications. On the other hand, they who consider the act 1592 as inseparably connected with the provisions in the act 1567, and the right of the General Assembly to require other qualifications, than those which are merely literary or moral; (as they have certainly done in many instances;) and to pronounce a final judgment or decision, which shall be binding on all the parties, and from which there can be no appeal, appointing the settlement of the presentee, or refusing to appoint it—represent the clause in the act 1567, which gives the General Assembly the power of final decision, as limiting and explaining the concluding clause in the act 1592. They therefore hold, that every question relating to the settlement of a pre-

* Second Book of Discipline, Ch. 12.

presentee, must *take end*, or be finally decided, as the Assembly *decerns and declares*; and that if the Assembly decides against the induction of a presentee, whatever the disqualification imputed to him may be, the patron has, in that event, no right to retain the fruits of the benefice; but has whatever remained of the six months, allowed him by law for presenting, to present another to the benefice.

When those two acts of parliament are taken together, to a person who had no system to maintain, they would naturally seem to have laid down this general doctrine—That when the *inferior* Ecclesiastical Courts refuse the induction of a presentee, on other grounds than his qualifications, the patron may retain the fruits of the benefice; but that, having a right of appeal, when he has brought the question by appeal from the *inferior* courts, to the court of last resort, the General Assembly, the controversy between the patron and the *inferior* courts, must be terminated by the decision of the Assembly, which the act 1567 declares to be authoritative and final; and that *there* must also terminate the patron's right to retain the fruits of the benefice.

This general idea receives considerable countenance from a fact, which can scarcely be questioned—that, neither at the time of the act 1592, nor at any period before the Restoration, will it be easy to find examples, in which a patron ever attempted to retain the fruits of a benefice, after the General Assembly had decided against the induction of his presentee; though there are certainly examples, in which the *maius bonum ecclesiæ*, quite independent of the moral and literary qualifications of the individual presentees, has determined the Assembly to refuse their induction; or in which the Assembly has set aside presentees, as disqualified for the particular charges to which they had been presented, on grounds quite independent, both of their knowledge and their morals.

There are, indeed, two solitary examples, since the restoration of patronage in the last century, in which the patron did retain the fruits of the benefices, after the decision of the Assembly, refusing to admit their presentees; and in which other incumbents were admit-

ted, who were found to be the legal ministers of those parishes, though they were ultimately deprived of the stipends belonging to them ; which the patrons, whose presentees were rejected, were found entitled to retain, and did retain, during their incumbency.

But in both these instances, there was a competition between contending claimants, for the right of patronage ; and in both, the decision of the Assembly proceeded, not on any circumstances in which either the condition of the parishes, or the qualifications of the presentees, were involved, but solely and exclusively on the legal rights of the claimants to the patronage.

This was at least a different question, from any question which the Assembly can decide, where there is no dispute with regard to the right of the patron to present. And though the patrons were, in both the instances referred to, found entitled to retain the fruits of the benefices *after* the decisions given by the Assembly, they were so, on grounds which render these cases quite distinct, from the case of a presentee, whom the Assembly set aside as disqualified, whatever may be the disqualification imputed to him. The patron's right to retain the fruits, in those two examples, was indeed built on the same statute of 1592, which applies to every other case in which the induction of a presentee can be refused by the Assembly. But an attention to their history will shew, how very doubtful the points of law on which the decisions turned, were believed to be, at the time, and how much the courts of law were divided with regard to them.

The two parishes in question had become vacant in 1746 and 1748, and in both, the claimants of the patronage, whose presentations the Assembly rejected, were ultimately found to be the legal patrons.

In one of the cases, (the case of the parish of Culross,) a minister had been inducted by the presbytery, on the nomination of those whom the Assembly had found, and who, from the usage, were universally believed, to have been in the possession of the patronage ; and this was done, while a question, relating to the right of patronage, was in dependence before the civil court, at the instance of a claimant, whose presentation

the church courts had rejected, but whose right the civil court ultimately sustained. This patron afterwards claimed the fruits of the benefice, notwithstanding the induction of the minister whom the presbytery had preferred; and he seems to have been allowed to retain them without opposition. In a printed account of the case, nothing more is stated, than the question relating to the right of patronage. The minister inducted, whom, it is known, the parishioners compensated by a voluntary contribution, seems therefore to have acquiesced without litigating his right to the stipend. There appears to have been a sufficient reason to have prevented any litigation on this point. Though the Assembly had decided against the right of the patron, the presbytery had inducted the minister on their own authority; and had done so, in the face of an appeal to the Superior Court. The thing done, was not therefore the deed of the Assembly, but a deed of the presbytery alone; and a deed besides, which was carried into execution, contrary to the established law of the church, with regard to appeals, which ought to have sisted the proceedings. This circumstance gave the minister a strong reason for declining to litigate the question, relating to the patron's right to retain the fruits of the benefice, which it is evident might have ultimately led to a decision, finding his own induction illegally executed. This was, indeed, the construction put on it, when it was quoted in the case of Lanark, a case, in which the Court of Session *unanimously* gave an opposite decision, and found that the patron had no right to retain the fruits.

In the case of Lanark, though the right of patronage was decided by the Court of Session, in favour of the Crown, whose presentation had been rejected by the presbytery, the question relating to the fruits of the benefice was afterwards the subject of a long litigation. The minister who had been admitted by the Church Courts, under the authority of the Assembly, contended, that when patrons in competition have neglected to ascertain their right of patronage, till an actual vacancy has occurred, they are not entitled to protract a vacancy, by a litigation to establish it, which ought to have been instituted before, and must abide by the consequences of their own neglect—That the presbyteries were by law

and immemorial usage entitled to decide, between two presentations offered to them, according to the best of their information, from their own records, and from other sources, when the right of patronage had not before been decided by the civil court—That this had been understood to be the law of Scotland, not only under the Presbyterian Church, but at every period, during the establishment of Episcopacy—That the bishops had exercised the same right, which was afterwards held to be vested in the presbyteries—That they sustained the presentations of the patrons, who, according to the best of their information, appeared to be in possession, and gave induction to the presentees—That their induction was always effectual *for the vice*, in whatever way the permanent right of patronage might afterwards be determined in the civil courts—And that in this case, the presbytery of Lanark had done no more.

Though the Lords of Session had before decided the right of patronage against the person, whose presentation the presbytery of Lanark had sustained, they were *unanimous* in finding the minister who had been admitted to the pastoral charge, under the judgment of the presbytery, to be the legal minister of the parish, and to be entitled to the stipend; and in repelling the claim of the patron to retain the fruits of the benefice.

This question was, however, afterwards carried by appeal to the House of Lords; and by the decision of that Supreme Court, governed, not by the law of Scotland, as it had always been before understood, but by ideas taken from the practice in England, under a very different constitution, it was ultimately reversed.* The Crown, whose right of patronage had been sustained, retained in consequence the stipend of the parish, during all the minister's incumbency; though, with regard to the pastoral cure, the original deed of the Ecclesiastical Courts was held to be final and irreversible. The minister admitted was declared to be the legal pastor of the parish. And though there was afterwards an unsuccessful attempt to deprive him of the manse and glebe, and even of the possession of the church, he

* See Note GG.

was found by the Court of Session, to have an unquestionable right to remain in possession of these, to the end of his incumbency.

Both these examples (of Culross and Lanark) are obviously anomalous cases, such as never did before arise, or have ever since occurred; and, standing alone, as they do, are distinguished by circumstances so peculiar to themselves, that they should scarcely be acknowledged as precedents for cases, in which the circumstances are not the same. They do not surely authorize similar proceedings, where there has been no competition of presentations, no mistake with regard to the right of patronage, and no admission of a minister who has not the presentation of the real patron. Nor ought they to warrant the conclusion, that a question relating to the induction of a presentee shall not take end, (in terms of the act 1567,) as “the General Assembly determines and declares,” in cases, in which there is no dispute with regard to the patron’s right.

It should be considered besides, that no greater absurdity can be imagined, than that it could ever have been in the contemplation of law, that a benefice should, in any circumstances, be separated from the pastoral cure to which it is attached. The examples in which it has been so, have risen out of peculiar circumstances, which could not be in the view of the legislature, and are therefore to be regarded as exceptions from a general rule; which, because they are exceptions, serve to confirm, and cannot subvert it; and which must, at least, be pronounced to be no precedents, where the circumstances are not the same. In the History of the Church, many examples will be found, in which the General Assemblies have set aside presentees, to whom neither literary nor moral disqualifications could be objected, and in which the provision in the act of 1567 has uniformly taken effect, without any attempt, on the part of the patrons, to retain the fruits of the benefices. This circumstance ought to go some length to sustain the position, that, in ordinary cases, the final judgment of the General Assembly does not leave the patron a right to retain the fruits of the benefice; and that the act 1567 is still in force, though the cases must

now very seldom occur, to which it was, by any interpretation, intended to apply.

But leaving this subject, on which more perhaps has been said than was necessary, it is of more importance to the following statements to remark, that, whatever the opinions of later times have been, the law of patronage was, in all the periods from the Reformation to the Revolution, considered by the Presbyterian Church as an intolerable grievance; and that, at the Revolution, their release from it was one of the leading objects of the Presbyterian Clergy. In this point they appear to have been all agreed; and their aversion to patronage was so universal, and so deeply rooted, that, though King William was privately unwilling to make the concession, his best friends convinced him of the necessity of going at least a certain length to gratify them, on a subject which they regarded with so much solicitude.

On the other hand, whatever may have been said to the contrary, patronage was certainly in use down to the latest period before the Restoration, of which there is any record of the proceedings of General Assemblies. In the unprinted acts of the Assembly of 1645, there is a proposal for applying to parliament, to allow presbyteries to plant the churches, "*which are of the patronage of forfeited and excommunicated persons.*" In 1647, in an act of Assembly, "for pressing and furthering the plantation of kirks," there is an instruction given to every presbytery, to make a report to the Assembly, of "*what kirks are under patrons, what kirks have no patrons, and who are the several patrons.*" In another act of the same year, there is a renewal of an act of Assembly at Glasgow, and another at St Andrews, "*concerning lists for presentations from the King, and the trial of expectants.*" These acts demonstrate, that patronage was, to a certain extent, still in use, even at that period of the church, which has been commonly supposed to have been most adverse to it. But they shew, at the same time, the solicitude of the clergy, to get into their own hands the command of as many patronages as possible. And the truth is, that, at this time, neither the crown, nor the subject-patrons, were frequently in a situation to resist them. The presbyteries were, in a

great measure, allowed to nominate the candidates for vacant parishes, not only when they sent lists to the crown, but in other cases. The candidates named by them were proposed to the kirk-sessions, who, in each case, from several in the nomination, were allowed to elect one, who was then proposed to the congregation. By the directory for the election of ministers, of 1649, if a *majority* of the congregation dissented, they were to give their reasons, of which the presbytery were to judge. If the presbytery should find their dissent founded on *causeless prejudices*, they were notwithstanding to proceed to the settlement of the person elected. And there is a clause subjoined, which in those times would apply to many cases, “ That where the congregation “ *was disaffected or malignant*, in that case, the presbytery “ *were (by their own authority)* to provide the parish “ with a minister.” Though this mode seemed to give weight to the clergy, only in the first nomination, or on extraordinary emergencies, and more influence to the people in ordinary cases, it is evident, that the clergy had still the chief influence in the ultimate decision, as well as in the selection of the candidates. For when the people were divided, which very generally happened, it lay with the Church Courts at last, to determine between the parties ; and it can scarcely be supposed, with all the purity which can be ascribed to the intentions of the clergy, that the candidate who had most favour among them was often rejected.

These circumstances are adverted to, because they go a great way to explain the provisions of the act 1690. It was not thought expedient to give the clergy the influence, which, in whatever form it was exercised, they really possessed before the usurpation of Cromwell, and still less to place any power in the great body of the people, which could interfere with the right of election. King William’s advisers followed a middle course, between these extremes. Though their arrangement was certainly suggested by the former practice, it was in a great measure free of its chief disadvantages. In place of the presbytery, it gave the original and exclusive nomination to the heritors and elders. The person nominated was then indeed to be proposed to the congre-

gation, who might approve or disapprove, *for reasons shewn and substantiated*; but who had no power of rejection, without substantiating reasons, which the presbytery, and (on appeal) the Superior Courts, were to pronounce sufficient; *at whose judgment the cause was "to be ordered and concluded."* But no majority of the congregation was mentioned, as in the Directory of 1649, who might, for reasons shewn, disapprove, though they had not a right of election. Each individual parishioner might give his reasons of dissent for the judgment of the presbytery; a regulation, which, though apparently as popular, was, in its practical effect, a very different thing, from the voice of a recognised majority.

The act 1690 was not the production of the clergy, who have already been stated, as not exceeding the number of sixty. Though some of the ablest among them were no doubt consulted, the act was the work of such of the King's ministers, as were best acquainted with the state of the country: And its immediate effects on the condition of the people, did equal credit to their intentions, and to their discernment.

6/ Though it is asserted in the preamble to the act 1712, restoring patronages, that the mode prescribed by the act 1690 "*had proved inconvenient, and had occasioned great heats and divisions,*" it is unquestionably true, that whatever private differences there might be in particular cases, there is no period in the History of the Church, in which the settlement of ministers was conducted with as little bustle or heat, or with as much regularity, as during the interval from 1690 to 1712.

It cannot be affirmed, that there was no discontent or opposition excited, by the settlement of individuals. But nothing of this kind is on record, which created any public disorder in the country, or any permanent divisions among the people. A few cases there certainly were, in which the adherents of the Episcopal party resisted the introduction of Presbyterian ministers. But a single example can scarcely be given, from any quarter of the kingdom, of differences which arose among heritors and elders, in the nomination of ministers; or of differences between them and the con-

gregations, by which any serious or lasting inconvenience was created. They frequently brought their case to the General Assembly; though the chief debates in the Assemblies, of this period, related to projected translations, and especially to competitions between different parishes for the same ministers. From the keenness of these competitions, the same cases sometimes appear in different shapes, on the records of two or three successive Assemblies. But, what it is of most importance to observe, the decisions of the Assembly appear to have been always effectual at last; and it will not be found, that the opposition made to the settlement of any individual minister, ever deprived him in the end, either of the usual attendance, or of the general confidence of the parishioners. There is not, during the whole period, a single example on record, of the great body of the people deserting a parish church, on account of the settlement of a minister, under the authority of the Assembly.

The General Assemblies, of this time, were much more occupied in finding clergymen for the remote districts, and in adjusting the competitions of different parishes for the same clergymen, when the vacancies were so numerous, and the number of candidates so disproportioned to them; than in deciding on any differences, which arose among the heritors and elders of any parish, under the provisions of the act 1690. If the people sometimes remonstrated against their decisions, (and the examples in which they did so, scarcely occur, except when there was a competition of parishes for the same minister, or when a minister who had been nominated refused to accept, and the parishioners solicited the interposition of the Assembly against his wishes,) it will be found, that there is not a single instance, in which the parishioners did not ultimately submit to the judgment of the Assembly.

It ought to be remarked besides, that it does not appear, that, at this time, the members of the church discovered any considerable symptoms, either of party or political divisions. Their sufferings as Presbyterians, under the preceding reigns, were too recent, to allow anything of this kind to come in competition with their solicitude, to extend the benefits of their establish-

ment, to every district of the country ; and by an assiduous and faithful discharge of their pastoral functions, to provide effectually, for the quiet and comfort of a people, so lately driven to every extremity, by the most unfeeling and barbarous persecutions—persecutions, which no length of time can consign to oblivion ; which neither any change of manners, nor any severity of sarcasm, should tempt their descendants to palliate ; and which it required all the severity of a regular and enlightened government, as well as all the consolations of religion, in any degree to compensate.

There is another important fact, which ought to be mentioned here, though it will be afterwards again adverted to. There does not appear, during the whole interval from 1690 to 1712, the least vestige of a doctrine, so much contended for at a later period, which asserted a *divine right* in the people, individually or collectively, to elect the parish ministers. In all the questions before the General Assemblies, with regard to the settlement of parishes, there is no claim to this effect, either asserted or pretended ; nor does there appear to have been, in any single instance, an opposition to the execution of the act 1690, on any principle of this kind. Whatever have been the disadvantages of the act 1712, they did not originate in its contradiction to any supposed claim of divine right ; which, at the time of this enactment, though there might be private opinions of individuals in its favour, was neither avowedly asserted, nor conceded.

It is well known, how keenly this doctrine was brought forward at a later period, and how much more mischief it produced, than any principle involved in it, would have naturally led dispassionate men to anticipate.

In 1712, patronages were restored by an act of parliament, brought forward by the Tory ministry of the latter part of Queen Anne's reign ; an act, which was certainly intended by them, to operate against the Whigs of Scotland, whom they found steady and active opponents of their measures ; but which none of the Whig administrations, which have since been in power, could ever be persuaded to repeal. It had long been a favourite object with the Episcopal and Tory party in Scotland ; and

the clergy had taken some alarm on the subject, as early as the year 1703 ; which, in that year, the commission of the General Assembly stated, in an address to the parliament of Scotland.

The act 1712 came upon them suddenly at last ; but its immediate consequences were neither as visible, nor as extensive, as either its friends or its opponents have since affirmed, or had then predicted. The settlement of ministers by presentations was, at first, but in few instances, resorted to ; and in the examples which occurred, the presentees were personally so acceptable to the parishioners, as to disarm any opposition which might have been made to them. In many cases, in which presentations were lodged with the presbyteries, the Church Courts effectuated the settlements without much regard to them ; the sentences of the synods and assemblies, proceeding more on the calls, than the presentations, even when both were before them. In a few instances, (such as the case of Mr Christie, presented to the second charge of Dunfermline in 1717,) the presentees were set aside by the Church Courts, on account of the opposition made to them, and other candidates were inducted. But in all cases, the proceedings of the Church Courts were founded, more on the calls, than the presentations ; and when the parties were satisfied with the result, little attention was given to the forms which led to it. The truth is, that, during this period, vacant parishes appear to have been, very generally, filled up by the presbyteries, either with the tacit consent of the patrons, even when they lodged their presentations ; or, *jure devoluto*, when they did not present at all.

Supposing this state of things to have continued, (and the clergy had not then sufficient foresight, to be aware that it would not continue,) it became a subject of very serious deliberation, to settle a definite rule, by which the proceedings of the Church Courts should, in all such cases, be governed. Overtures were, with this view, transmitted by the assembly to presbyteries, from 1712 to 1723. Many alterations were inserted in them, from year to year. The substance of the act 1690 was in general adhered to ; though, in the succession of overtures transmitted, there was an evident inclination dis-

covered, to give more weight to the heads of families than that act allowed them, without directly introducing them as electors. The presbyteries, however, were far from being agreed on the subject ; and at last those overtures were laid aside, without having settled any question.

It is material to state these facts, because they prove, on the one hand, that whatever differences existed on the subject, what was afterwards called the *divine right of the people* was not even then brought forward ; and, on the other, that the act 1732, which will be afterwards adverted to, was no wide or extravagant departure, from the general language of assemblies, from 1712, or indeed from 1690. *

It has been already observed, that for many years after the date of the act restoring patronages, presentations were by no means introduced into general practice. There were, notwithstanding, several abuses of the right of patronage, which very early created serious disorders. They are enumerated in a memorial addressed to parliament, in 1715, by the commission of the General Assembly, in which the most flagrant and mischievous, and not the least common abuse which is mentioned, is the practice by which patrons presented individuals, who held the best, to the smallest benefices ; certain that they

* There is a remarkable fact, which belongs to this period, and deserves to be mentioned. There had been a long dispute, about the settlement of the second minister of Dunfermline, already alluded to. It terminated at last, in an application to the commission of the General Assembly of 1718, by the magistrates and council of the burgh, supported by the heritors and kirk-session of the parish, with the *unanimous* concurrence of the presbytery ; asking the commission, (after laying aside the presentee, Mr Christie,) to appoint, in the technical terms of the Church Courts, a call to be moderated in favour of four candidates, whom they named, one of whom should be elected by the majority of the magistrates and town council, the heritors and elders of the parish. No mention whatever is made of the heads of families, or of any other individuals in the parish, or even of their right to object to the candidate to be elected. And yet it is remarkable, that this application was made, when Mr Ralph Erskine, who was afterwards one of the heads of the secession, was the first minister of Dunfermline ; and as the *presbytery*, and, as far as appears, the *kirk-session*, were *unanimous*, must have had his special approbation and concurrence—a fact, which is by no means unimportant, when it is connected with the proceedings which took place, after the year 1732.

would not accept of their presentations. By raising processes before the Ecclesiastical Courts, for the translation of presentees who had not accepted of their presentations, which they knew beforehand must be unsuccessful, the patrons protracted the vacancies ; and, under the law, as it then stood, were enabled, in the mean time, to retain the vacant stipends. And though they only attempted to retain them, while they had questions relating to calls and translations in dependence *before the inferior courts*, and never, after the Assembly had pronounced a final decision ; it was sometimes in their power, by an artful management of the litigations, to keep possession of the vacant stipends for several years. An act of the 5th of George I. was therefore passed, to correct these, and some other manifest abuses ; by which a presentation is declared to be void, if it is not accepted within six months after the vacancy ; and is even declared to be void, if the presentee is the pastor or minister of another parish. Under this last clause, a beneficed clergyman is at least *in terminis* excluded, from the right of accepting a presentation at all. And Lord Kaimes and Lord Swinton, both eminent lawyers, have laid it down as settled law, that a presentation, according to this act, is void and of no effect, if it is granted in favour of a beneficed clergyman. How far the uniform practice of sustaining presentations to beneficed clergymen, has given the clause a different construction, though it may be doubtful, is not likely to be questioned. The chief design of the act was, to prevent a patron from employing his right of patronage, to keep a church vacant, in order to retain the vacant stipend ; and to put an end to all such sinister expedients and collusion, as had before been employed with that view ; and in this respect, the object of the act has been completely attained.

Though there had been several examples of the abuses, which this act was intended to correct, it is undoubtedly true, at the same time, that the number was comparatively small, of settlements effectuated by means of presentations, from 1712 to 1732.

On the other hand, it is clear, that the Assembly pronounced many sentences, during this period, without much regard to the rights of patronage.

In 1723, when Mr Hepburn was translated from Torrieburn to Edinburgh, the Assembly ordained, that that vacancy should not be filled up, without the leave and direction of *the Synod of Fife*. The patron, at that time the proprietor of the estate of Culross, was not so much as mentioned, or alluded to. In 1724, when a presentation was given by the Crown to the Church of Lochmaben, a call was moderated, not limited to the presentee; and a different candidate, who was held to have had the majority of the town council, heritors, and elders, was actually inducted by the presbytery. This settlement was, indeed, rescinded by the Assembly; but the result was, that both calls were set aside by that Supreme Court.—That the Lord Advocate of the time was asked to apply to his Majesty, not to insist on his presentation.—That he promised to use his influence, and agreed that both calls should be set aside; and that a new moderation was appointed, not limited to the presentee. In 1726, a presentation to Twynholm was set aside, and a different candidate from the presentee was inducted. The same thing happened in 1727, in the case of Hoddam. And there were many similar examples at the same period.—In 1728, a sentence of the commission, which sustained a call to Principal Chalmers to be minister of Old Machar, and appointed his settlement, is disapproved of by the Assembly; chiefly on the ground, that the rule laid down in the Directory for Calls, in 1649, had not been followed. No regard whatever seems to have been paid to his presentation, (though he had a presentation,) either by the commission, or the Assembly. After much litigation, *and upon a new call*, his settlement was ultimately made effectual by the Assembly, in 1730. In 1730, Mr Macdiarmid of Ayr's translation to Renfrew was refused by the Assembly; though the patron persisted in prosecuting his translation, till a final sentence was obtained. And when that sentence was at last pronounced, though the patron had retained the fruits of the benefice, during the dependence of the process, there was no attempt whatever to retain them, after the Assembly decided against the translation.

It is unnecessary to give more examples, to shew that,

during the period referred to, the right of patronage was but partially exercised—That presentations were, as far as possible, discountenanced and disregarded by the Church—That the sentences of the Ecclesiastical Courts were in general ultimately effectual—And that there is not one example, during the whole period, in which a patron attempted to retain the fruits of a vacant benefice, after a final decision is given, against his presentee, by the General Assembly; though they were uniformly retained, till that decision was pronounced.

The examples quoted may perhaps serve besides, to establish some other points, which have not been very generally attended to. They go at least a great way to prove, that, at this time, the General Assemblies contended for no rule, for the settlement of parochial churches, which went in substance beyond the act 1690—That even the Directory of 1649, though sometimes appealed to, did not give *the election of ministers* to heads of families, or to those who have since been called *the Christian people*—That all the overtures on the subject, from 1712 to 1723, are substantially founded on the act 1690; though, in some of them, a more popular language is employed, than in others, without departing from the general principle—And, finally, that when the Assemblies professed to prepare rules, for the settlement of parochial churches, which were only to apply to cases, in which the *jus devolutum* took place, they were, in truth, contemplating what were then the great majority of vacancies in the church; a fact, which gives the true character to all their proceedings on this subject.

The General Assemblies appear to have conducted the business of the church, as fairly and dispassionately, as can be expected in such a body of men, for the general interests of the community, down to the year 1725. Before this time, they discover no very prominent features, either of political or party contentions; but seem to be heartily united, in providing for the usefulness and respectability of the church, and for the peace and security of the country.

But from 1725 to 1732, their proceedings undoubtedly begin to assume a different character.

The Directory of 1649 begins to be referred to, more authoritatively, than had been the practice before. The proceedings of the commission, of 1725, are set aside by the Assembly of 1726, (as has already been stated,) chiefly because they had proceeded on a call, not exactly after the model of that Directory; though it is certain that, in that very case, they were much more vulnerable on other points, in which they had usurped the powers both of the presbytery and synod; in manifest violation of most essential articles, in the constitution of the church. From this time, it is quite clear, that there is a party contending for popular election, in the settlement of ministers; that is, for an election by the heads of families, as well as by heritors and elders; in opposition, both to the law of patronage, and the practice established under the act 1690.

On the other hand, the party in opposition to them, far from contending for the settlement of parishes by presentations alone, without the aid of a call, contend for nothing more, than that the call shall be exclusively by heritors and elders, and approved or disapproved, for reasons shewn, by the congregation; and that this rule shall be uniformly followed, in the exercise of the *jus devolutum*; under which, far the greatest number of vacant parishes were at that time supplied.

The commission propose to the Assembly a new overture for the settlement of ministers, under the *jus devolutum*, in 1728; in which, though somewhat more influence is apparently given to the *congregation*, in the *nomination* of candidates, the same rule is still adhered to, for their *election* by heritors and elders. But the party becomes every day more visible, who pointed at a more popular rule. Though the overture of the commission does not appear, to have gone far beyond that which was laid aside in 1723, it was never moved in the Assembly; and after some attempts to improve it, it was probably neglected, because it could no longer meet the ideas of those, who were by this time beginning to assume the character of the popular party in the church.

There were new overtures in preparation afterwards,

but none of them were transmitted to presbyteries; and as presentations became more frequent, the contention between the parties, by this time formed in the church, became both keener, and more visible. The induction of presentees became more difficult; the exertion of church authority was more coercive; and was more frequently resorted to.

The church courts were by no means uniform, in their decisions. But as the opposition to presentees became more frequent, and more unmanageable, they began by degrees to act with more firmness; and from the obstructions which were given to the execution of their sentences, all their resolution became necessary, to carry them into effect.

None of the least of their difficulties arose from the clergy themselves. When the great body of the parishioners resisted the induction of a presentee; when a great proportion of the elders, or of the resident heritors, in the parish to which he was presented, refused to subscribe his call; and when, supported by the heads of families, they came forward in the Church Courts, to oppose his settlement; many of the clergy began to entertain, what they considered as conscientious scruples, against the induction of a minister, who, according to their conception, could have no pastoral relation to a people, who refused to submit to his ministry: And on this principle, many of the presbyteries refused to execute the sentences of the Superior Courts, which appointed such inductions.

This circumstance presented a very serious obstruction, to the exercise of church authority on the subject; which, if it had been carried to extremity at first, might have produced a schism in the church, still more extensive, than that which was soon after exhibited. The individuals, who hesitated to give obedience to their ecclesiastical superiors in this point, and who made it a subject of conscientious scruples, were neither to be persuaded nor compelled. And as they had the support of the great body of the people, it was at least a matter of great delicacy, to put to hazard, the authority and the peace of the church, by peremptory sentences, which might be disregarded or disobeyed.

The policy of those who were unwilling to bring this question to issue, at a time when the minds of a great proportion, both of the clergy and of the people, were heated and irritated on the subject ; and when the opposition to individual presentees became every day more inveterate ; suggested an expedient, by which the most authoritative sentences of the Assembly were executed, in the midst of the keenest opposition of the people, and without interfering with the scruples of the clergy.

Instead of appointing the presbyteries themselves, as the constitution required, to execute the sentences of the Supreme Court, the Assembly, or commission, appointed individual ministers of their own number ; or members of synods, or presbyteries, in the vicinity of the parishes ; to execute their sentences ; by giving collation to the presentees, in the same forms which, in ordinary cases, would have been competent to the presbyteries themselves ; leaving it to such members of the presbyteries, as were willing to join with them, to take part in the transaction.

This expedient was adopted in 1729, in the settlement of New Machar ; and continued to be resorted to, in cases of similar difficulty, for 20 years after that time. It was certainly a great deviation from constitutional law. But the times were difficult. The scruples of many of the most popular clergy were as sincere, as they were obstinate. The agitation of the people on the subject was every day becoming more visible, and violent. The opposition to many of the presentees, who were inducted by the committees appointed by the Supreme Court, was as inveterate after their induction, as before ; and their churches were in danger of being almost entirely deserted. The leaders in the Assemblies were not willing to add to the struggle, occasioned by the opposition of the people, a controversy with the scruples of the clergy ; and this was the origin, of what were then denominated among the populace, “ the “ riding committees.”

There will be occasion to advert to this subject again. The expedient adopted was, at the best, but a palliative ; which, they who devised it, allowed themselves to believe, would be effectual to preserve the authority of the church, without endangering her tranquillity.

In 1732, another expedient was adopted, which has had more permanent effects, on the situation, both of the church and of the country.

No overtures relating to the settlement of ministers had been lately transmitted to the presbyteries. Though several overtures on the subject had been in preparation, they had not been followed out. And they who were impatient to have a definite rule laid down, which, without departing from established usages, should be effectual to crush the doctrines then keenly agitated, relating to the divine right of *the people at large in the election* of ministers; persuaded the Assembly to pass an act, *by their own authority*, and without transmission to the presbyteries; containing a rule for the settlement of ministers, in all cases, in which the nomination should fall to the presbyteries; either *jure devoluto*, or by consent of patrons, who did not exercise their right of patronage. It has already been stated, that, according to the practice then subsisting, this description would have applied to a great proportion of the vacancies in Scotland.

The act contains in substance the same rule, which had been established by the act of parliament 1690; with some additional regulations, which might become necessary, in certain specified cases.

No proceeding of a General Assembly has ever been followed by consequences, which have more generally or permanently affected the state of the country. It was most strenuously opposed at the time, by those, who were then considered, as the popular party in the church—By many of them, because the act had not been previously transmitted to presbyteries, in the form of an overture, in terms of the Barrier Act; and by a considerable number besides, of those who asserted the divine right of the people, in the election of ministers; and who would have been as hostile to the act of parliament of 1690, as to this enactment of the Assembly. The first class had constitutional grounds to plead for their opposition; while the latter asserted the rights of conscience, and the rights of the people which they professed to derive from the authority of Christ.

The state of the controversy was such, as might have

been naturally expected, after the division in the Assembly, to produce a very considerable degree of irritation in the country; and of this circumstance, the keenest of the popular demagogues among the clergy, did not fail to avail themselves immediately.

The Assembly was no sooner dissolved, than Mr Ebenezer Erskine, minister of Stirling, began to sound the alarm against their enactment; as a gross encroachment on the rights of the people, on the constitution of the church, and (what was much more serious) on the laws and authority of Christ. On the 4th of June 1732, a few days after the date of the act, he preached a sermon in the church of Stirling, full of inflammatory declamations; in which, after laying down, in broad and unqualified terms, the *divine* right of the people at large, to elect their own pastors, he roundly asserted, “That those professed Presbyterians, who thrust men
“upon congregations, without, and contrary to the
“free choice their great King had allowed them, were
“guilty of an attempt to jostle Christ out of his government, and to take it on their own shoulders.” In the preface to this sermon, which he immediately published, he expressly applied these assertions to the act of Assembly in question. In October following, he preached another sermon before the synod of Perth and Stirling; in which he affirmed the same doctrine, in terms equally unqualified, and of equal keenness and asperity.

It is not improbable, that the strong feelings of Ebenezer Erskine and his associates on this occasion, were, in a certain degree, exasperated, by another proceeding of the Assembly, which had taken place a few days before the enactment. The Assembly had decided a question relating to the settlement of a minister of Kinross, in the presbytery of Dunfermline; to which great opposition had been made, both by the parishioners and the presbytery; and in which, Mr Ralph Erskine, (the brother of Ebenezer,) minister of Dunfermline, and Mr Thomas Mair, minister of Orwell, (both of whom were afterwards leaders in the secession,) were deeply involved. The Assembly had not only appointed the settlement of Kinross, to be carried into execu-

tion, with circumstances of peculiar severity ; but they had prohibited the clerks from receiving any dissents from their sentence, or a protest which was offered from the bar, by Mr Ralph Erskine and others.* The following Assembly treated them with still greater severity. In 1733 Mr Ralph Erskine, Mr Mair, and others, were rebuked at the bar ; for their determined refusal to enrol Mr Stark, then minister of Kinross, as a member of the presbytery of Dunfermline. Neither Mr Ralph Erskine, nor Mr Mair, were members of that Assembly ; but the keenness with which they afterwards supported Ebenezer Erskine, in resisting the sentence pronounced on his sermon before the synod of Perth, was in all probability irritated, in no common degree, by these circumstances. This may be fairly admitted, though there is no reason to doubt, that the individuals themselves believed, that they were guided by principle alone ; and might not be conscious of any other considerations, which influenced their conduct. On the other hand, the Assembly certainly treated them with unmerited and useless severity ; when, not satisfied with having rebuked them for their obstinacy before, they *commanded them*, in the high tone of church authority, to *acknowledge* Mr Stark as minister of Kinross ; though, after his enrolment by the Assembly, they had already *judicially declared their willingness, to treat him as a brother*. There was an intemperance on both sides, to which, if the coincidence is fairly considered, there is little doubt that some part of the violence, which afterwards occasioned the secession, may be fairly imputed.

It would not be reasonable to judge any of the individuals of this period, by the ideas which prevail in the present times. The same circumstances would not now produce, either the same agitation, or be followed by the same consequences. But whatever was the ef-

* This last circumstance is referred to, in the preface to Ebenezer Erskine's sermon before the synod of Perth, in the keenest and most inflammatory terms ; and clearly demonstrates, that the treatment which he and his friends had received, in the case of Kinross, made no small part in his general complaint, against the conduct of the Assembly.

fect of the treatment given to the presbytery of Dunfermline, it was unquestionably true, that the decisions in the case of Kinross, and a few others which occurred nearly at the same time, connected with the act of Assembly in 1732, furnished the leading circumstances, which inflamed the zeal of the original seceders, and which ultimately led to their separation from the church.

The act itself (of 1732) goes no farther, than almost every overture on the subject, framed by the Assembly for twenty years before ; or beyond what had been the general practice of the church, since 1690. Nor will it be easy to shew, that the doctrine asserted by Mr Erskine in his two sermons, was ever held or practised by the church, at any period since the Revolution; or that it can be even reconciled to the language of General Assemblies, at any time before.*

Ebenezer Erskine certainly went much farther, than he was warranted to do by the doctrine and practice of the church, at any period since the Reformation. And though he inflamed the minds of the people, by placing his doctrine on the authority of scripture, and by asserting, what was incapable of proof—that he was contending *for the original laws of Christianity*, as well as for the ancient law of the Scottish Church—it may be fairly admitted notwithstanding, that he honestly affirmed, what he had brought himself to believe ; even while the unreasonable intemperance and pertinacity, with which he maintained it, can scarcely be denied.

* The First Book of Discipline had, indeed, placed the election of pastors in the people at large. But when the points, not sufficiently digested there, were corrected and new modelled in the Second Book of Discipline, the election, of pastors is declared to be, “by the judgment of the *eldership*, (that is, of the presbytery,) and the *consent* of the congregation ;” this language signifying, according to all the laws and usage which followed, the right of the people either to give their consent, or to state and substantiate their objections, of which the presbytery were to judge. The people were not the electors, even by this rule ; and though it gave more power to the presbyteries, than was ever afterwards conceded to them, it gave the people exactly the same place, which the language of the church, both in early and later times, uniformly assigned them.

His doctrines, indeed, derived their chief importance, from the keenness with which they were combated in the church courts ; and from the violence of those, who became his opponents or prosecutors. They who read his two sermons in the present times, will not think that they were in any respect worthy of the attention which was given them ; and will scarcely find it possible to doubt, that, with all the inflammable matter which they contain, had they been disregarded by the church courts, and never brought into question, their defects, in argument and substance, would soon have consigned them to oblivion.

It would be equally uninteresting and useless, to give in detail, the events which rose out of this controversy. The clamour excited against the act 1732 became so general and violent, that the Assembly found themselves compelled to repeal it, in 1734. Independent of its substance, it was resisted on the strong constitutional objection, that it had been enacted by the authority of the Assembly itself, without transmission to presbyteries. This was undoubtedly a legal ground for the repeal, and on this ground it was rested. But it is equally certain, that the popular clamour, and the support given without doors, to the brethren who afterwards seceded, had no small influence in producing it.

All the public proceedings of this time demonstrate this to have been the fact. The commission of 1733 had pronounced a sentence on the ministers who became seceders, “ loosing their relation to their “ parochial charges, and appointing this sentence to be “ intimated from their pulpits respectively.” In several instances, the people tumultuously resisted this intimation, and prevented it from being made. The General Assembly of 1734, so far from confirming the sentence of the commission, adopted measures, which were evidently intended to retain the disobedient brethren, within the pale of the church, and even to preserve them in ministerial communion with their brethren, notwithstanding the resistance they had given to ecclesiastical authority. They did not expressly repeal the sentences of the commission ; but they did so in effect ; when, without mentioning them, they empowered

the synod of Perth and Stirling, to do every thing in their power for restoring the peace of the church, without impeaching its authority.

There were, at the same time, two feeble attempts made, to obtain a repeal of the act 1712 restoring patronages. The commission of 1734 sent an embassy to London for this purpose, consisting of Mr Gordon, minister of Alford, Mr Willison, minister of Dundee, and Mr Macintosh, minister of Errol. But no success having attended this mission, a new deputation was sent to London by the Assembly itself, with the same instructions, in 1735; as has already been mentioned, in the account given of Lieutenant Colonel Erskine.* It does not appear that any direct application was made to parliament. But the records of Assembly in 1736 contain the address which was presented to the King by the three commissioners; and though they seem to have been sufficiently in earnest, and to have done every thing, which prudence or expediency could have warranted, they were as unsuccessful, as their predecessors.

But what shews, above all, the wish of the Assembly, of 1736, to conciliate the spirit of the times, they passed an act in this year, entitled “*An act against the Intrusion of Ministers into vacant Congregations, and recommending commendations to Presbyteries concerning settlements.*” It lays down a general doctrine, against the intrusion of ministers, contrary to the inclinations of the congregations; and affirms, that such an intrusion is in direct opposition to what has been the principle of the Scottish Church, since the Reformation. It recommends it to the judicatories of the church, to have due regard to this principle, in planting vacant congregations; and then it admonishes the presbyteries, to be at pains to promote harmony and unanimity; and to avoid every thing, which might excite unreasonable exceptions among the people, against respectable candidates.

It is scarcely conceivable, that this act could have done more, than sooth the discontent of the people, by conciliatory language; unless more could have been attempt-

ed, than perhaps was practicable; and unless it had been followed up by a train of authoritative decisions, which was far from being intended. It does appear, however, that, for some years after this time, the sentences of the Assemblies, in the settlement of ministers, are expressed in a more guarded and softened tone, than had been usual during some of the preceding years. They discover more solicitude to deal tenderly with the people, and not to irritate their humours, by unnecessary exertions of authority. To this extent, the enactment appears to have had some effect; and it ought perhaps in candour to be admitted, that the majority of those who were concerned in it might, at the time, have imagined it possible, to have done more, to connect the settlement of ministers with the *consent of the people*, which it supposed to be essential, than was afterwards found practicable, even by themselves. At the same time, it is equally evident, that the members of the Church who had been most determined, in disregarding the opposition made to the induction of presentees, if they concurred in this enactment, as they seem to have done, could have intended it as nothing more, than a concession *in terminis*, to the prejudices of the people, without any view to its influence on their decisions in particular cases, or to such a change of system, as could have had any practical effects.

The settlements of presentees, which had been before in dependence, and on which former assemblies had decided, though their sentences had not been completely executed, appear, from 1736 to 1740, to have been followed out, by the authority of the successive assemblies of that time, even where the opposition made to them was most determined. But the sentences pronounced are expressed in moderate terms. There is an evident intention, not to bear hard on individual ministers, who were unwilling to be concerned in the execution of such sentences. And though the assemblies do not appear to have judicially departed from the sentences which they had pronounced, there are some examples, in which the presentees appear to have been tacitly withdrawn, or indirectly laid aside; at one time, without the farther interference of the assembly; and at

another, by a resolution on their record. In these cases, the enactment of 1736 had certainly some effect.

It seems to have operated still more, in a few processes for settlements, which had not been considered by the Assembly before, in which they evidently shewed an inclination to conciliate the people. In some instances they, in direct terms, set aside the presentees, to whom the opposition was most violent. The most remarkable example occurred, in the case of the parish of Currie, in the presbytery of Edinburgh. In 1740, they refused to proceed to the settlement of Mr Mercer, then minister of Aberdalgie, as presentee to the parish of Currie, though he had been regularly presented by the magistrates and town-council of Edinburgh, the undoubted patrons. They set him aside, avowedly on account of "*the difficulties which attended his call,*" that is, on account of the general opposition made to him in the parish. They went farther, and followed up their decision, by recommending it to the magistrates of Edinburgh, to offer to the parish of Currie a leet of six candidates, and of them to present the individual, who should be selected by the majority of heritors and elders. It appears that this advice was followed. Mr Mercer was no more mentioned, and a minister, acceptable to the parish, was afterwards inducted. This was a remarkable decision, very unlike the proceedings of Assemblies since 1730; and it furnishes a striking example, in which the Assembly set aside a presentee, to whose life or doctrine no objection whatever could be stated; in which the personal views or interests of the presentee were not at all consulted; and in which the patrons made no attempt whatever, to retain the fruits of the benefice; though their presentee was not only not inducted by the Church Courts, but was, without any literary or moral disqualification, expressly rejected.*

* To those who are acquainted with the history of the time, this decision will appear to have been, in a considerable degree, influenced by the state of the country, and by the secession from the Church, which was just then openly avowed. Mr Mercer was the person who had first moved a censure on Ebenezer Erskine's sermon, in the synod of Perth; and the consequences of that measure were always connected with his name. He was in the highest degree obnoxious, from that circumstance, to every order of the people; and the sen-

There are other examples within the same period, and after it, of deference to public opinion, of presentees set aside, and of other expedients resorted to, to quiet the opposition made to the sentences of the Assembly, and to soften the asperities of ecclesiastical authority ; which were manifestly accommodations to the spirit of the times, rather than the result of any change of system or of principle, among those who then assumed to themselves the designation of the moderate party. Excepting the particular cases, there was not indeed any change of system intended. The decisions given with regard to different parishes, were indeed by no means uniform or consistent. The induction of ministers, where the resistance of the people was both violent and general, was frequently sanctioned by the same assemblies ; though the language of their decisions was commonly guarded and temperate.

The secession from the Church, which had long been foreseen, was at last completed, in 1740. All the endeavours of the Assemblies to persuade or conciliate the seceding ministers, though seven years had elapsed, ultimately failed. They had formed themselves into an independent presbytery, and by printed documents published to the world, as well as by public declarations from their pulpits, they had renounced all subjection to the authority of the judicatories of the Church. They had taken this step, long before they were finally ejected from their parochial charges. For, to do the Assemblies justice, they were not rash in adopting measures, which were to render their continuance in the Church impossible, and to complete their separation from it. To such measures, however, they thought themselves at last compelled to resort. In 1740, the Assembly pronounced a sentence of deposition on eight ministers, who had seceded, and appointed their several churches to be declared vacant.

On the principles on which the Assembly had proceeded, this measure had certainly become at last unavoidable. And, on the other side, it can scarcely be

tence of the Assembly was most gratifying to those, who either countenanced or deprecated the secession ; though it was certainly at variance with many decisions, in cases as difficult from their own merits, both before this time and afterwards. In 1735, Mr Mercer's translation to the parish of Dron, in the presbytery of Perth, had been in like manner refused by the Assembly.

denied, that the seceding ministers, trusting to their influence with the populace, and no doubt relying on what they considered as the argument in their favour, conducted themselves with no small degree of intemperance.

Be this as it may, dispassionate men, at this distance of time, must be compelled to admit, that great errors were committed on both sides. If Ebenezer Erskine and his associates were intemperate, in their attacks on the Ecclesiastical Courts; and assumed, as original principles of the establishment, what had never been acknowledged or acted upon, at any period of the church; if they were obstinate and unbending, beyond what either the weight of their argument, or the real merit of the questions at issue could warrant; it may be fairly conceded on the other side, that the party in the church who originally decided against them, were rash and injudicious, in taking up questions, which were much more likely to be set at rest by time, than by authority. The high tone of ecclesiastical discipline, which they adopted, was not to be easily reconciled with the language of indirect concession afterwards resorted to; which was but in a very slight degree supported, by the particular decisions of the time, or by any part of their general practice at a subsequent period. The injudicious mixture of forbearance and severity, manifest in the treatment of the seceding ministers, so far from being calculated to reclaim or persuade them, had an obvious tendency, to confirm their resolution to form a separate sect for themselves, and, by its natural influence on the people who followed them, to place them in open and determined hostility with the establishment. They relied on their popularity to secure them followers, and probably believed, that it would have accomplished much more than at first it did; though the remote consequences of their secession have certainly been more extensive and considerable, than they could have possibly anticipated at its commencement. On the other hand, they who at that time had the lead in the management of the church, affected to despise their influence, and to consider their secession as incapable of producing any serious or permanent effects. The anticipations of both

are at sufficient variance with historical truth, to afford a most impressive lesson to later times.

But though the consequences of the secession have not been precisely, what was on either side foreseen, it has undoubtedly made a material and permanent change on the ecclesiastical condition of Scotland. The seceders were soon divided among themselves; and their party distinctions, embittered by their perpetual appeals to the people, had an obvious tendency to lower their influence in the country, and to retard the progress of their sect. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, the number of their followers was gradually, and almost imperceptibly, augmented, in every quarter of the kingdom; till they have at last comprehended a proportion of the population, which neither the nature of their controversy with the church, nor the weight or talents of their original leaders, could have led, either their friends or their opponents, to anticipate.

There was, indeed, from the commencement of their separation, one obvious source of their influence and progress, of which they well knew how to avail themselves. Every new subject of discontent among the people, occasioned by decisions of General Assemblies, and every unsuccessful opposition to the induction of an obnoxious presentee, gave to the seceding ministers a new sphere of activity; and held out to them the prospect of a new congregation to be added to their sect. They planted their tabernacles, wherever they imagined they would find malecontents to fill them; and it may be naturally concluded, that, when they selected the situations with judgment, they were not often entirely disappointed.

Besides, they did not confine themselves to their original grounds of complaint, against the establishment, arising out of the act of Assembly of 1732. They brought forward to the people, every other species of defection, which they could impute to the church. And it is obvious, that there could be no great difficulty in discovering many objectionable facts, in the management of ecclesiastical courts, such as may be found in the conduct of every institution, in which human beings are concerned; or in framing exaggerated statements, of

real defects and corruptions, in ecclesiastical proceedings; sufficient to inflame the minds of the populace, and to rivet, wherever they could excite, their prejudices against the establishment.

They at the same time devised expedients and restrictions, by which for many years they excluded their adherents, from all communication with the established churches; and, in this way, from all opportunities of information, beyond what they received from themselves, or by their direction. They assumed the power of licensing preachers, and of afterwards ordaining them; and as their congregations multiplied, they divided themselves into different presbyteries and synods. But for many years they adopted the idea, that it was not safe to trust the education of their young men, to the universities or professors, in connection with the church; lest they should be infected by the corruptions which they imputed to the establishment. To render them independent, they created academies of their own, both for philosophy and theology, to which they originally confined every young man, who was afterwards to apply to them for a license. The effect of this bigotry was equally unfriendly to the influence of their sect, and to the permanent interests of the country. Many of their young men came forward, without the education which their situation required, and with a very slender portion of information. And nothing but the means employed, to prevent the people from having recourse to other instructors, could have kept them together, while this system was rigidly adhered to.

Happily for the country, and for the respectability of the seceding ministers, they have at last adopted juster, and more liberal views, both of the universities, and of the qualifications required for pastoral duty. They have still professors of divinity. But their prelections are now generally confined, to the time allotted for the vacations in the universities; and the candidates for orders in the secession, have at least the means of being as well educated as the ministers of the establishment.

This fact, whatever additional strength it may give to the secession, is of no small importance to the country at large. For, from the congregations of eight seceding

ministers, deposed by the Assembly in 1740, (adding to them the presbytery of Relief, which sprung from the deposition of a single individual many years later,) there have risen up at last, nearly three hundred and sixty seceding meetings; which, at a moderate computation, may, in round numbers, contain a fourth or a fifth part of the population of Scotland.

When so large a proportion of the inhabitants of the kingdom is concerned, it is at least consolatory to believe, that they have access to instructors, who are qualified to do them justice. The doctrines now delivered in the seceding meetings, is, in no essential article, different from the instruction received in the established churches. Though, by being more numerous, and always well educated, the established clergy can certainly produce a much greater number of considerable men; it cannot be denied, that, among the ministers belonging to the secession, there are individuals not inferior to the most respectable ministers of the establishment; and it ought to be in candour admitted, that their people are, by a great proportion of them, as well instructed, as those who adhere to the church.

The country at large certainly reaps an important advantage, from this change of circumstances. For, in spite of the circumstances which have prevented, either the civil or ecclesiastical rulers, from attending to the progress of secession, it has been always increasing, from its commencement to the present times; and, in one or other of its different sects, is constantly acquiring additional strength, from causes, which it is now in vain, and perhaps impossible, to counteract.

The ecclesiastical rulers affected to despise the individuals who were the original seceders, as men of such limited information and capacity, as could only create an influence, among the lowest of the people. This was an exaggeration beyond the truth; for many of them were not inferior to their contemporaries; and, as preachers, they had popular talents, sufficient to secure the attachment of their followers. And though their learning and their individual talents had been as inconsiderable, as was affirmed, the popularity, of the topics, which they derived from the original occasion of

the secession, and of others with which they were, from its commencement, incorporated, and on which they were perpetually declaiming, gave them an influence on great multitudes of the people, of which it was impossible to deprive them.

But all the advantages, which they possessed, would have little availed them, if no new occasions of discontent had arisen, from the management of the Ecclesiastical Courts. The secession, well or ill founded, had undoubtedly placed the rulers of the church, in circumstances of peculiar difficulty and delicacy.

It has been already stated, that for many years after the enactment of the statute of 1712, the settlement of a great proportion of vacant parishes had been effectuated, by means of a call from heritors and elders, without the intervention of the patrons;—and that in many cases, in which there was a presentation before a presbytery, they were accustomed, without taking much notice of it, to proceed on the call from heritors and elders. The patrons, who gained their object, in the induction of the presentees, seldom thought it necessary to remonstrate against a practice, which was neither warranted by law, nor, if the subject had been well considered, justified by expediency. It served to keep down the prejudices of the people against the law of patronage, which, under this management, seldom contradicted their wishes. But it certainly aggravated the difficulty of the church courts in other cases, in which the patrons demanded the settlement of their presentees, notwithstanding the opposition made to them, by any number of the parishioners.

When the patrons began to exercise their rights more frequently, and with less attention to the wishes of the people; when the people saw, that they had a ready access to ministers of their own selection, in seceding meetings; the opposition to presentees became more inveterate, and unmanageable; and it was soon found to be a matter of extreme difficulty and embarrassment, in the Church Courts, to decide between the patrons and the people, without sacrificing to either, what, by one party at least, was held to be the constitutional law of the church, or of the state.

The two parties, who were understood to divide the church, were not exactly characterized by the same doctrines, which have since distinguished them. Both, at that time, admitted the constitutional necessity, of a call from a parish, to become the foundation of a pastoral relation, between a presentee and the parishioners; but they who called themselves *the moderate party*, affirmed the legal call to be limited to heritors and elders, (according to the spirit of the act of Assembly of 1732;) while the other party contended (as the original seceders had done) for the right of the parishioners at large, or at least of the heads of families, to be admitted as callers. The former had the support of the government, who, by this time, perpetually interfered in the management of assemblies, and especially on every point, which related to the settlement of ministers; while the latter derived their chief strength from popular favour, and from the influence of those who deprecated every measure, which they thought was calculated to alienate the people from the established church, and to lessen the usefulness and respectability of the parochial ministers.

Archibald Earl of Isla, afterwards Duke of Argyle, came to have the chief management of Scotch affairs; and under him Dr Patrick Cumin, one of the ministers of the city, and Professor of Church History in the University of Edinburgh, was the chief ostensible leader in the church. Dr Cumin was certainly a clergyman both of worth, and of talents. His distinction as a man of letters, and as a preacher, entitled him to every degree of respect. His powers of conversation raised him above his contemporaries. His capacity for the management of public business gave him sufficient advantages, in his political character; though his influence, in a great measure, depended on the administration which supported him.

The party, under his management, did not pretend to attempt the abolition of *calls*, in the settlement of ministers; and always professed to require the call of heritors and elders, before they gave effect to a presentation.

But, under their management, it was seldom difficult to

procure such a call, as satisfied them, even in cases, in which the great body of the parishioners were hostile to the settlements. By the influence of the patrons, which came to be more keenly exerted, than was usual at an earlier period, and the help of non-resident heritors, they seldom failed to effect their purpose. And when the Assemblies executed their sentences by committees of their own, the induction of the presentees was completed, even where the opposition was strongest, without either encroaching on the scruples of one class, or being defeated by the timidity of another.

It must be evident, however, that the appointment of such committees was neither sanctioned by constitutional law, nor justified by any experience of its expediency. It diminished the immediate difficulty, of executing the sentences of the Assembly. But it had no tendency to remove the prejudices of the people; and was evidently calculated to lower, in their eyes, the respectability of the ministers, who were inducted by means so unusual and irregular.

The last committee on this service was appointed in 1751; and, from this time, the Assemblies peremptorily required the execution of their sentences, to be completed by the presbyteries respectively.

There was at first great difficulty, in carrying this resolution into effect. Many individuals, who conscientiously believed, that the consent of the congregation was essential to the pastoral relation, thought they were bound in duty, to decline to take any active part, in the settlement of ministers, to whom a general opposition was made by the parishioners. On the other hand, the General Assemblies were resolute in maintaining the authority of their sentences; and the ministers who ventured to disobey them, subjected themselves to the severest ecclesiastical censures.

The first case which occurred, after this mode of proceeding was finally resolved on, was the settlement of Inverkeithing, in the presbytery of Dunfermline. Though there was, in that instance, a call sustained by the Assembly, it depended in a considerable degree on non-resident heritors; and the opposition made by the congregation was violent, and almost general.

The ruling party in the church were, by this time, fully prepared to apply ecclesiastical censures, to the disobedience of church authority; for which, they were persuaded, no other remedy could be found: And when they came to appoint the presbytery of Dunfermline to admit the presentee to Inverkeithing, they not only enjoined every member of the presbytery to attend the admission, but they declared that the quorum should be *five*, in place of *three*, the legal quorum. They sent the presbytery from their bar to Inverkeithing; and required them, after admitting the presentee, to report their obedience to the Assembly, on a specified day. When they returned, they reported that, of their whole number, only three ministers had attended; and that they, not being a quorum, according to the terms of the Assembly's appointment, did not feel themselves authorized to proceed to the admission. After hearing the defence of those members of the presbytery who had absented themselves, of whom the greatest number pleaded conscientious scruples, they approved of the conduct of those who had attended, who, without a quorum, were not authorized to have executed the Assembly's sentence, and accepted apologies for the absence of some other individuals. Of six members of the presbytery, who pleaded at the Assembly's bar conscientious scruples, they solemnly deposed one, from his office as a minister—Mr Thomas Gillespie, minister of Carnock—and ejected him from his living. There was then no time to complete the admission of the presentee at Inverkeithing, during the session of the Assembly. The presbytery were therefore again appointed to execute the sentence, and to report their obedience to the synod of Fife; and the Assembly besides suspended from their judicative capacity, in the superior Ecclesiastical Courts, every member of that presbytery, who should be absent, on the day appointed for the induction of the presentee, and who should not offer a relevant excuse for his absence, to the synod of Fife. This sentence of suspension was afterwards applied to three members of the presbytery; Mr Hunter, minister of Saline, Mr Daling, minister of Cleish, and Mr Spence, minister of Orwell.

The censures of the church, on this occasion, fell on

individuals, who were all acknowledged to be men of integrity and principle ; of whose sincerity there was no suspicion. * Mr Gillespie, in particular, on whom the severest censure fell, was charged with nothing but his absence from Inverkeithing, on the day appointed for the induction of the presentee ; for, excepting his attendance, he had no official duty imposed on him, which could have been affected by his absence. It has always been admitted, by those who had best access to know him, that nothing but what he considered as a sense of duty, had prevented him from obeying the appointment of the Assembly. He was indeed one of the most inoffensive and upright men of his time. He was equally zealous and faithful in his pastoral duties ; and his private life was irreproachable. His talents were certainly underrated by those who marked him out, among his brethren, as the most eligible victim of a disobedience, in which so many were associated. But he had done nothing to distinguish him from the rest. He had never entered deeply into ecclesiastical business, and was at no time a political intriguer. And, when all these circumstances are considered, there was at least great reason to have hesitated, in pronouncing on him a sentence of deposition. †

But the Assembly seized on this occasion, to bear down, by a strong example, all future opposition to church authority. His deposition gave rise to a new sect of dissenters, afterwards known by the designation of “ the Presbytery of Relief ;” which has maintained itself ever since, and has added a considerable population to the dissenters from the Established Church. Mr Gillespie became the founder of this sect, very unwilling-

* This sentence of suspension was recalled, about 12 or 14 years afterwards.

† The temper of mind with which he received the censure inflicted on him, is not unworthy to be recorded. The moderator of the Assembly pronounced the sentence of deposition from the chair ; and Mr Gillespie stood at the bar to receive it. When he had heard it to an end, he replied, in these striking and impressive words : “ I thank God, that to me it is given, not only to believe in the name of “ the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to suffer for his sake.” Whether he was well or ill informed, no man suspected, that this scriptural expression of his feelings did not come from the sincerity and the fullness of his heart.

ly. He was partial to the establishment, to the end of his life; and of this he gave a striking proof, when, on his death-bed, he advised his congregation to apply to the church, after his decease, to be restored to her communion; which they afterwards successfully did.

Whatever the Assemblies gained, in point of authority, among their own members, by all these proceedings, it is unquestionable, that their severity contributed at the time, in a considerable degree, to the progress of the secession. The active rulers of the church affected to despise the seceders. But the fact was unquestionable, that every church settlement, effected by the strong arm of authority, in opposition to the great body of the parishioners, opened a new dissenting meeting, and separated a new congregation from the communion of the establishment.

From 1752 to 1763, there are not many examples which occur, in the proceedings of Assemblies, of the settlement of ministers effected, when the opposition to them was very considerable. In two strong cases, the presentees were set aside, from the *inexpediency* of their settlements—in one of them, where the opposition was greatest, by a compromise, under which the presentation was relinquished, and a different minister was inducted; in another, after both the presentation and the call had been sustained by the Assembly, because the inexpediency of the settlement was notwithstanding admitted. There is scarcely more than one example besides, during this interval, of a strong opposition to a presentee whose settlement was appointed by the Assembly; and none, in which the presbyteries appear to have shewn any reluctance to obey the sentence.

After this time, there were several examples of settlements appointed by the Assembly, to which great opposition was made; and there occurred some cases between 1765, and 1774, which occasioned more obstinate and protracted litigation, than is to be found on record, since 1732, or, indeed, since the Revolution in 1688.

But, by this time, the Duke of Argyle was gone, who had, for so many years, directed the influence of government, in the management of the church; and Dr Cumin, whose political influence had been intimately connected

with his, had no longer the same sway, as a leader of the church. Dr Robertson, one of the ablest and most eloquent men, whom his country has ever produced, whose personal character entitled him, in the highest degree, to the respect and confidence of his friends, and whose celebrity as an historian will reach the latest posterity, became, from 1763, the avowed leader of the party, who had assumed the designation of *the moderate party* in the church.

He had the magnanimity to emancipate himself and his party, from a dependence on any great man. He had as much of the influence of government to assist him, as had ever been given to the management of the church. But though he received the support of every administration, he was not so connected with any individual, that his influence could be held out as depending on him.

Dr Drysdale, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, and afterwards principal clerk of the General Assembly, was his respectable coadjutor, in the active management of his party. His indefatigable industry and talents, added to the weight and sound judgment of Dr Robertson, had no small effect, in giving strength and solidity to the system, which was in substance before, and from this time avowedly, pursued.

In Dr Cumin's time, it had never been directly or publicly affirmed, that the call of heritors and elders was not essential to the induction of a minister. On the contrary, the idea that it was essential, was then held up to the public, as the general principle adhered to. And yet it cannot be denied, by any one who impartially examines the transactions of this period, that there were then as many examples, of what have been called *violent settlements*, or inductions to parochial charges, in opposition to the great body of the people, as at any subsequent period. Nor can it be pretended, that the settlements of this time did not, in many parishes, add as much in proportion, to the number of seceders from the church, as any of the settlements, which were carried into execution, after 1763.

At the same time, it was at least pretended, that, during this period, the principle was adhered to. And when it came to be afterwards avowedly departed from,

many of those individuals, who had been leading men, in Dr Cumin's time, and even Dr Cumin himself, professing still to adhere to the same doctrine, became zealous opponents of those who were called *the moderate party* in Dr Robertson's time.

Yet it must in candour be admitted, that however the principle had been supported before, by means of non-residing heritors, the difference in practice between the disputed settlements, before and after 1763, was by no means considerable.

The different situation of the parties was no doubt obvious. In 1725, and afterwards, they who called themselves *the moderate party* had to contend, not only with the people, but with what was then no small proportion of the clergy, with those who extended their ideas of calls to the whole body of parishioners: many of whom went so far, as to place the claims of the people on the *jus divinum*. But this description of the clergy had been gradually dying out, and was now no longer considerable. The opponents of Dr Robertson professed to contend for nothing more, than what they who now called themselves *the moderate party*, had before asserted; the necessity of a call from the heritors and elders, as the foundation of the pastoral relation. Both parties professed to reserve to the people their right to object, for reasons shewn. But Dr Robertson and his friends professed to confine the right of objection to the return of the edict, and then to limit it to objections to the life or doctrine of the presentee; while the others maintained, that the people had a right to offer their objections to the call for the judgment of the presbytery, at the time when the merits of the call were to be decided on.

The old forms of proceeding, notwithstanding this difference of opinion, were still adhered to; and no settlement was effected, till an attempt was made to procure a call. In difficult cases, any of the parishioners were admitted to subscribe the call, as well as the heritors and elders; and though Dr Robertson was extremely cautious, in departing from the ancient technical language, which had been in use in the sentences of Assembly, he came gradually to introduce the term *concurrence* in place of the term *call*. Of this innova-

tion, there is perhaps not more than one example, in Dr Cumin's time; and that occurs in a case, in which, though the Assembly sustained both the presentation and the *concurrence*, they notwithstanding set aside the presentee, and applied to the patron to present another, which he afterwards did.

It was Dr Robertson's policy, that, in effecting settlements, even the most difficult, by presentations, the *old forms*, in other points, should be always observed, as they still are. But the principle was ultimately avowed, and adhered to, that a presentation to a benefice was in all cases to be made effectual, independent of the merits of the call or concurrence. There are cases, as has been already stated, which have sometimes occurred, in which presentees have been set aside. But this can scarcely be shewn to have happened in Dr Robertson's management, merely from defects in the concurrence from the parish. The general doctrine, that a presentation, adhered to by the presentee, should in all cases be made effectual; without any reservation founded on the merits of the call, or on the number of heritors, elders, or parishioners, who concurred or dissented, was uniformly maintained, during the whole period of Dr Robertson's influence in the General Assemblies.

The influence of Government was no doubt steadily employed to support the measures of *his* party, and every successive administration came to be persuaded that sound policy required them to support him. Though individual clergymen in Scotland might be as independent as the members of any church in the world, every one who is acquainted with human life, must be aware of the weight, which must always accompany this kind of political influence.

But it will be admitted by every individual, at the same time, who has had sufficient access to estimate Dr Robertson's management, that the system, which he and Dr Drysdale did more than any of their predecessors to consolidate, never could have been conducted or matured, with more moderation or sagacity, than they brought to it.

The same general system has been followed by their successors. But the facility with which they have been able to conduct it, is unquestionably to be in a great

measure imputed, to the moderation and firmness united, which eminently distinguished Dr Robertson; and to the sound good sense and splendid eloquence, which he uniformly brought to the subject, in much more difficult times than they have had to encounter; supported by the sagacity, the assiduity, and the conciliating manners of Dr Drysdale.

During Dr Robertson's time, the struggle with the people was perpetual; and the opposition to presentees so extremely pertinacious, as in a great measure to engross the business of the Assemblies. The parties in the church were then much more equally balanced, than they have ever been since that period. The measures which were adopted, in the face of such perpetual opposition, it required no common talents to manage or defend; especially considering, that the leaders in opposition were such men as Dr Dick, Dr Macqueen, Dr Erskine, Mr Stevenson of St Madois, Mr Freebairn of Dumbarton, Mr Andrew Crosbie, &c.; men of the first ability in the country; and some of them possessed of an eloquence for a popular Assembly, to which there was nothing superior in the church or in the state.

Dr Robertson's firmness was not easily shaken; but his caution and prudence never deserted him. He held it for a maxim, never wantonly to offend the prejudices of the people, and rather to endeavour to manage, than directly to combat them. Some of the settlements in dispute were protracted, for eight or ten years together; and though the General Assemblies steadily pursued their system, and uniformly appointed the presentees to be inducted, their strongest sentences were not vindictive, and seldom went beyond the leading points to which they were directed.

The perpetual delays created, before the processes against the induction of presentees were finally determined, were certainly not in favour of the parishes, in which they occurred; and subjected the individual litigants to very considerable expence, without bringing them any advantage in the end. But they answered another purpose, which was ultimately in favour of the system pursued by the ecclesiastical rulers; of which its ablest supporters could scarcely have predicted either the

extent or the consequences. The zeal of the people was irritated, and at last exhausted, by processes in the Assemblies so long protracted, and so uniformly unsuccessful. Their opposition to presentees did not become less frequent, or less difficult to manage at home. But the people became gradually less inclined to bring their opposition to the Assemblies. Before Dr Robertson retired from the management of church affairs, in 1781, there were, *in comparison*, few cases of disputed settlements brought to the General Assembly. Their number has been gradually diminishing ever since ; till at last an example of such a process scarcely now occurs, in the course of several years.

The great majority of the church are convinced, that the system of patronage, so long resisted in the church courts, is at last completely established. Even many of those individuals, who held a different doctrine, thirty or forty years ago, do not think it expedient, in the present times, to revive a controversy, which such a long series of decisions in the supreme court is held to have settled. It appears to them, that, at this distance of time, the revival of the controversy would not only contribute nothing, to lessen the evils which they still impute to the system, which has been so long acted upon ; but that, without any real advantage to the country, it would aggravate the difficulties which occur, in effectuating the induction of individual presentees, and add greatly to the irritations, which serve so much to distract, and to divide the people.

Whether it was originally expedient to have adopted the system ; whether the system was, at anytime, agreeable to the constitutional laws and usages, either of the church or of the state ; and whether the support given to it, by his Majesty's Government, under every successive administration, was dictated by sound policy, are quite different questions.

Dr Robertson's prudence led him to do nothing, which might unnecessarily agitate questions of this kind. Of this fact, no example more striking can be given, than that which arises from his conduct, with regard to the clause, which was first introduced into the annual instructions given to the commission in 1736, relating to " the grievance of patronage ;" which was uniformly

continued in the instructions given by every Assembly from that time, till after Dr Robertson ceased to take any management in the church. *

The clause was in the following terms: "And the Assembly do farther empower and direct the said commission, to make application to the King and Parliament, for redress of the grievance of patronage, in case a favourable opportunity for so doing, shall occur, during the subsistence of this commission." The language of such a clause, continued in the instructions to every commission from the year 1736, till after Dr Robertson retired from the management of public business, which he did in the year 1781, demonstrates how deeply rooted the original ideas of the church on this subject had been; and at the same time shews the caution of Dr Robertson, long after he and his friends had practically abandoned every opinion on which the clause had been originally framed, in avoiding to stir an unnecessary question in the General Assembly, by a premature attempt to expunge it. He was aware of the popular prejudices in favour of an instruction, which had been so long familiar to the public. He had

* Though the commission has been often mentioned in this detail, the nature of this court has not been so explained, that a stranger to the Scottish establishment will easily understand it. The General Assembly annually appoints a committee, which usually consists of all the members of Assembly, with full power to decide causes, which the Assembly have not had time to discuss, and which they remit to this committee, which has the name of "the *Commission* of the General Assembly;" adding, besides, instructions to watch over every thing in which the general interest of the church appears to be concerned. The commission has full power to decide finally in the causes remitted to them; and no appeal can be taken against their decisions. There is, however, a regulation, which provides a remedy, against any supposed injustice in the sentences of the commission; which is equivalent, in its practical effects, to the power of appealing. There may be a complaint, at the instance either of a party, or of a member of the court, brought to the next Assembly, against any sentence of a commission, in which it can be stated, that the commission has exceeded its powers; and on such a complaint, the Assembly may reverse or alter the sentence complained of.

The commission has four stated meetings in the year, in May, August, November, and March. The moderator of Assembly, on the application of a certain number of members, may call an extraordinary meeting, when any unusual circumstances require it. The quorum of the commission is thirty-one, of whom twenty-one must be ministers.

not forgotten the violent struggle, which had been made against his party, in the General Assemblies of 1765 and 1768, when overtures were introduced for the purpose of instituting a public inquiry into the causes, to which the rapid progress of secession from the established church was to be imputed ; and in order to counteract them, to obtain, if possible, a more popular mode of inducting the parochial ministers. He had successfully resisted the keen opposition which was made to him, on both these occasions. But he was too considerate, to go back, directly and unnecessarily, to the same subject ; for the purpose of expunging from the instructions to the commission, what had so long been considered as a dead letter on the records of Assembly.

The clause was, however, expunged, almost immediately after he retired from public business. There was not perhaps then the same reason for any delicacy on the subject ; and the proposal met with no opposition. The object of the clause was so directly contrary to the system, which had been pursued for so many years, that even they whose general opinions would have led them to oppose the innovation, were so conscious of the glaring inconsistency, between the conduct of Assemblies and their annual instructions, that they thought it equally inexpedient and indecorous, to agitate a question on such a subject.

The language of the majority in Assemblies, at this time, universally was, that the secession from the Church, instead of increasing, was on the decline ; and that the superior character and talents of the established clergy were gradually weakening its resources, and would ultimately exhaust them.

Experience has not verified these sanguine expectations. At the distance of a few years, after Dr. Robertson retired, the people, disgusted with unsuccessful processes before the Assembly, relinquished the plan of their predecessors ; and came seldom to the Assembly, with appeals from the sentences of the inferior courts, appointing the settlement of presentees whom they resisted. But they began to do more quietly, or with less observation, than formerly, what was not less unfriendly to the establishment. In ordinary cases, they now leave

the Church Courts to execute their sentences, without opposition; and set themselves immediately to rear a seceding meeting-house, which very frequently carries off a large proportion of the inhabitants of the parish. The bustle in Assemblies is in a great measure over; or a disputed settlement no longer creates any serious interest or division in the Church Courts. But the silent increase of seceding meetings has gradually weakened and contracted the influence of the establishment, on the general population.

It ought, however, to be mentioned, at the same time, that many additions have been made to the number of dissenting congregations, by an increasing population, for which no adequate provision has been made, by the erection of new churches within the establishment.

But, independent of all the circumstances which can be mentioned, as serving either to promote or to weaken the secession, it must be evident to every man of observation, that this view of the state of the country is not favourable to its general interests. The expence occasioned by so many additional establishments, is manifestly a heavy burden on property of every kind. But setting aside this consideration, which is now irremediable, it is obviously a subject of serious regret, that so large a proportion of the people should be in a state of separation from the establishment; and so much the more, that there is now no *essential* difference in the education, in the doctrines, in the standards, or in the general character, of the established and the seceding clergy. They are all attached to the same constitution of the Presbyterian Church, and have all the same general ideas of pastoral duty.

The original causes of separation have not, therefore, the same aspect as when the secession began. Though the ministers of the church and of the secession, may still have different views of some points, which come into discussion in the Ecclesiastical Courts, there do not now appear to be many of the same causes of hostility between them, *as pastors of the people*, which operated at first to produce the secession. While they do the same duty, by the same rules, with equal capacity and purity of intention, there do not appear to be many strong rea-

sons for continuing a separation, which is neither favourable to the progress of religion, nor to the real interests of the country.

In these circumstances, can it be thought impertinence or presumption, to suggest to both, that the points on which their present separation turns, may “deserve to become the subject of a serious and candid review?”

Would it be either degrading or unfriendly to the Established Church, if she were to declare her willingness to receive into her communion, on the same footing as her own Chapels of Ease, such of the seceding ministers and their congregations as were willing to return; sustaining their ordinations, and leaving their congregations to provide for them, as they do at present?

Some individuals of the Relief society have already been received on this footing. And if the disposition to place the same confidence in the other descriptions of seceders were shewn by the Church, though the effects might not be immediate, and, on the most favourable supposition, could only operate very gradually, there can be little doubt, that such a union might be substantially effected in the end, as would very materially promote, both the interests of religion and the best interests of the kingdom.

Patronage, the great bone of contention at first, could be no subject of difference, with regard to chapels where no patronage could exist; while ministerial communion maintained, among every order of Presbyterian clergy in the country, would serve to unite the people again; who ought never to be divided, as long as they adhere to the same standards of discipline and of doctrine.

Such an idea as this, will no doubt be keenly reprobated by many individuals, both of the establishment and the secession; and indeed the number of both who, on the first mention of the subject will reject it, will probably be so great, as to give little prospect of its being at all generally adopted. There are points, besides, supposing it were practicable, especially in what relates to discipline and order, which would require to become a subject of compromise, and perhaps of forbearance, on both sides; and in managing the discussions which

would be necessary, both would have occasion for all the good temper and piety which they could bring to them.

But if the idea itself is really founded, either in good sense, or in sound policy ; if it were once sincerely adopted, on either side, and especially on the side of the establishment ; there is not much reason to doubt, that it would ultimately, though perhaps slowly and gradually, work its way into practice. And there cannot be a shadow of doubt, that if this were to happen, its effects would soon appear to be equally in favour of the establishment itself, of the dissenting congregations received into the Church, and of the general prosperity of this part of the United Kingdom.

Our southern neighbours, who are in general but little acquainted with the interior (if that expression may be allowed) of our Church history ; or with the sects which have risen among us during the last century ; think perhaps with some degree of contempt, of the points at issue, between the different parties in the Church, or between the Church and the secession.

The Reformation in England was carried on from its commencement, under the authority of the Sovereign, and, in the constitution of the Protestant English Church, left none of the same points, either for claims or discussions among the people. The Reformation in Scotland, was the work of the nobles and the people, in opposition to the government ; and the Protestant ministers were most efficient coadjutors to both, in obtaining the object for which they contended. The constitution of the Scottish Church, founded, as they believed, on the original institutes of Christianity, was the work of the clergy, supported by the nobility ; and every order of the people, took a deep and a personal interest in it.

The questions in dispute, in later times, have naturally arisen from the original forms and laws, under which the Presbyterian Church was established. The points at issue between the different parties, have been the result of the general spirit of liberty and independence in religion, which the inhabitants of Scotland inherit from their first reformers ; and which is incorporated with the

whole frame and texture of their ecclesiastical government.

There is great room for free discussion, and for difference of opinion, with regard to all of them. There is equal room for forbearance among themselves. And they discharge their duty with most fidelity, both to the community and to one another, who follow out, with most sincerity, their best views of public law and general utility; and who most effectually divest themselves of private competitions and party spirit. There is no perfection attainable, in the present condition of human nature. But he will never reproach himself for his public conduct, whose sense of duty has more influence in directing him, than either his personal interests, or his private affections.

The Church of England is at least as much divided, as the Church of Scotland has ever been; and has as great a proportion of her population, who desert her churches, or withdraw from her communion, as will be found in any part of the secession in Scotland. The points of difference, in the two countries, are not the same; and the causes of separation are at least as much to be imputed to the clergy of England, as any, which exist in Scotland, can be ascribed to the clergy there; while the sources of division in England are at least as irreconcilable, as any which can be traced in the sister kingdom.

The separatists in Scotland have one advantage, to which the sectaries in England have no claim. On all subjects of discipline and pastoral duty, they follow the same general rules, with the established church. They make no innovations in the forms of worship, or in their public doctrines; and the manner in which they discharge their clerical functions, is exactly the same, with that which distinguishes the parochial clergy.

The ecclesiastical divisions existing among the people of Scotland, are at least not more unreasonable in themselves, nor are they more beyond the reach of a remedy, than those which take place among their southern neighbours; unless their experience shall verify a maxim, which has often been held on other subjects, and is too often founded in truth; that the nearer men approach

to one another, in their opinions, without uniting, the more irreconcilable their differences are apt to become.

In the general *sketch*, which the preceding pages of this appendix contain, of the Ecclesiastical History of Scotland, the laws relating to the nomination and induction of ministers, and the consequences connected with their progress and execution, have suggested the chief part of the subject. This was unavoidable; because the proceedings in the settlement of parochial ministers, have, in the periods referred to, occupied the chief attention, both of the church courts and of the people; and have been, almost exclusively, the origin of all the distinction of parties, among the members of the church.

Dr Erskine, in his conduct as a member of the Ecclesiastical Courts, which has given occasion to the subject of this part of the appendix, was classed with those who have, of late years, formed the minority in General Assemblies, and were opposed to the party who followed the system of Dr Robertson. The preceding sketch is sufficient to shew the points, on which the parties were divided; as well as the progress of opinions relating to them, from one period to another. It will serve, at the same time, to ascertain the general principles which Dr Erskine adopted, and by which he wished to be distinguished in public life.

The controversies relating to patronage are certainly now, in a great measure, at an end. And whether the policy, ultimately adopted by the church, has been agreeable, or contrary, to its original constitution; or is at last to be considered as wise or impolitic; the whole weight of government being uniformly given to the ruling party, it would now be equally unwise and inexpedient, to disturb the decisions of more than half a century; and to agitate the country anew by controversies, which, with the influence of government, on one side, would always have the same termination.

These are certainly the present views of by much the greatest proportion, both of the clergy and laity; and it is obvious, that the party distinctions can no longer be rested on the same grounds.

That there are parties still, is unquestionably true. But it would not be easy for the zealots of either side, to state clearly or intelligibly, to impartial spectators, the precise points on which the party distinctions now turn. The one may perhaps, in some cases, be disposed to give more weight to the people, than the other is willing to concede. But it is impossible that either can deliberately conceive, that *the church* can, in any circumstances, be separated from *the people*; or that there is any possible advantage, which can be secured to the *church*, as a *church*, which does not derive every portion of its value, from its subserviency to the general edification of *the people*.

The questions relating to patronage, and the induction of parochial ministers, have certainly formed the leading features of the ecclesiastical proceedings in Scotland, during the course of the last century.

But it must not be from thence concluded, that no other subjects have occupied the attention or the zeal of the Church Courts. The pastoral discipline of the church; the provision made for the instruction of the people, and for the preservation of their morals; the education and trial of candidates for the ministry; the superintendence of the clergy, both with regard to their private manners, and their pastoral duty; and the enactment and execution of the laws and regulations, which the state of the church, or the condition of the people require; are all subjects of perpetual interest and attention, both in the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court, and, in the inferior judicatories of the church.

On all these points, the inferior judicatories have their place in the government of the church, as well as the General Assembly; and, as has been already stated, their sentences are all subject to review, and may be brought to the Assembly as the court of last resort.

But on this subject it ought to be stated, that whatever the influence of party spirit may be, on party questions, it has seldom indeed been found to interfere with the administration of justice, or with the treatment of individuals in private causes. Like the members of every society, the members of Church Courts may sometimes feel an influence, of which their own minds are scarcely

conscious. But all private views and party feelings are universally disavowed, in the exercise of the discipline of the church; and can seldom indeed be imputed with any degree of reason or truth. It can scarcely be denied, by any person competent to form a sound judgment, that, in Scotland, ecclesiastical discipline and order are as efficiently and impartially protected and preserved, as in any other country of Christendom.*

There is no occasion to be more particular on this head. And the only other subject which requires to be stated, relates to the superintendence of the clergy; which is as complete and effectual, by the constitution and practice of the Scottish Church, as in any church of the Christian world, and will be found stated in a note below.†

* The public meetings of the Church Courts, and especially the annual meetings of the General Assemblies, are of themselves of great importance to the best interests of the country. The publicity of their debates, in which every real or supposed abuse or improvement, which has been attempted in the country, or which may affect the condition of the people, can be brought into free discussion; is, independent of the immediate result of any debate, a perpetual source of national advantages, which experience has shewn to be of incalculable value.

† The late Dr Claudius Buchanan, in *his Christian Researches*, (p. 111.) has represented the Syrian Bishop of Malabar, as questioning him with regard to the constitution of the church in this part of the British Island. When the Bishop was told by Dr Buchanan, that the presbytery, or (as he called them) the casheeshas, were all equal to each other, he is represented as asking, with evident surprise, "What, is there nobody to overlook the casheeshas?" and when he received for answer, "*not one*," as having replied, "There must be something imperfect there."

It is impossible to read this statement without astonishment. Dr Buchanan might be ignorant of the constitution of the church of his own country. But he ought to have known, that every minister in Scotland is under the perpetual *superintendence* of the presbytery to which he belongs, subject to the review and control of the synod, and the General Assembly: That by the forms of the constitution, every individual minister is obliged to answer in each of these courts, both for his private conduct and his pastoral functions; and that the superintendence over him, so far from being a dead letter in the constitutional law, has at all times been in strict and uniform practice, so as to reach the morals and the clerical functions of every individual, as often as the circumstances have required it. No man who is a competent judge of the subject, or of the condition of the Scottish clergy, can be ignorant of this fact, or of the faithful application of

This sketch has already been extended far beyond the bounds originally allotted to it.

Many other points might have been adverted to, in the constitution and practice of the Scottish Church, which would have rendered the detail more interesting, and the information, to those who are unacquainted with the subject, more complete. The author is sensible, besides, that there are many defects, both in the substance and the composition of this hasty sketch, for which he must trust to the indulgence of his readers, and which it is much easier to account for, than to vindicate.

At the same time, he trusts, that enough has been stated, to serve as a general outline, both of the principles on which the ecclesiastical constitution of Scotland is framed, and of its practical effects on the condition of the country.

The same spirit of liberty and independence, and the same consideration for the condition of the people, which have been recognized by the British government, since the Revolution in 1688, are incorporated with the original laws and institutions of the Scottish Church. But, what is of much greater importance under the laws existing, the instruction and edification of the people, and the best means of guarding the purity of their morals, have, at all times, been the chief objects professedly attended to, both by the Ecclesiastical Courts, and the parochial clergy.

the law where it is requisite : To watch the conduct of the ministers of the church : To investigate every charge which can be brought against them ; and, without respect of persons, to apply to their conduct the censures of the church—admonition, suspension, and deprivation—as often as such censures become necessary.

The superintendence under which the ministers of the Scottish Church have been placed, by their constitutional law, which is as strictly adhered to, at the present time, as at any period of her history, is ten times more efficient, than the superintendence of any individual has ever been, in the Christian Church. Dr Buchanan had not spent much of his life in Scotland, and was certainly unacquainted with the subject which he professed to explain ; though his misstatement with regard to the Scottish Church, whatever the cause or the design of it was, can certainly, where it is understood, add nothing to the honours of Episcopacy. The Episcopal Churches have many advantages of their own, and have certainly no occasion to have recourse to such meretricious distinctions, as the representation given to the Syrian Bishop might appear to bestow on them.

* See Note HH.

The members of the church, like all fallible men, may often differ about the means of doing most practical good, or of preventing practical evils. But this must be imputed to the imperfection of human nature, and of every thing which depends on the agency of human beings, rather than to any radical defects in the constitution of the church.

Amidst all the diversities of opinion, and the division of parties on particular subjects, which appear in the preceding pages, it cannot be denied, by those who are competent to judge on the subject, that the practical effect of the church establishment in Scotland, on the general information of the people, on their private morals, and on their religious character, equals, if it does not surpass, whatever can be imputed, in the same points, to any other church in the world.

This is the most important fact which can be stated; and in comparison with this fact, every other feature in the laws or practice of any ecclesiastical body, is equally unimportant and uninteresting.

No. II.

Extracts from the Sermon of Dr Davidson, preached in the Church of the Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh, on the 30th of January 1803, being the first Sabbath after the Funeral of Dr Erskine.

—— Though Dr Erskine sought not fame, and even shrunk from it, yet his uniform character, his public professional labours, his disinterested and active benevolence, and his few, though important, publications, gained him such estimation in the minds of good men, both at home and abroad, as falls to the lot of but a small number of the human race.

—— As a scholar, as a gentleman, as a friend, as a philanthropist, as a Christian, as a pastor, who can be mentioned as excelling Dr Erskine? In rejoicing with those who rejoiced, in weeping with those who wept, in enlivening and delighting his friends, with his cheer-

ful and interesting conversation, and in speaking a word in season to the afflicted Christian, he was surpassed by none. Who was weak? and he was not weak? who was offended? and he did not burn?

———In *his* character were concentrated extensive learning; fervent piety; purity of doctrine; energy of sentiment; enlarged benevolence, uniformly animated by an ardent zeal for the glory of his Master, and for the salvation of men.

In a good cause, he was inflexible; in friendship invariable; in discharging the duties of his function, indefatigable. In his public ministrations, he was indeed “a workman that needed not to be ashamed, “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The following Extracts from the Sermon preached by Dr Inglis, on the same occasion, will be equally acceptable to the Public.

———The mind of your late pastor, Dr John Erskine, was richly endowed by the hand of nature. He possessed no ordinary portion of those talents, which, when improved with a view to personal aggrandizement, are the foundation of what is *great* in the human character. But the bent of his mind was directed to what is good, rather than to what is great. In the exercise and application of the talents he had received, every motive of a personal kind, appears to have yielded to a desire of usefulness, in a degree, that has been rarely exemplified among men. Well qualified to excel, as a candidate for literary fame, and encouraged by the favourable reception, which, as an author, he ever experienced, he yet chose, in many instances, rather to give his time and labour, for bringing into greater notice, what was likely to be useful, in the works of others. If the good he desired, could only be done, he would contend with none, about the honour of doing it.

If we look for the distinguishing feature of his mind, we cannot fail to recognize it, in that ardour of spirit, which is the animating principle of every pursuit, and

so effectually animates many, in whatever is subservient to their worldly honour and interest. But the ardour of his spirit resolved itself, almost exclusively, into Christian zeal—zeal for the honour of God, and the best interests of his fellow men. And let it not be thought, by any, who have but distantly known him, that his was a zeal, not according to knowledge, or enthusiastic and ungoverned zeal. Let us in this view appeal to facts. It is to religious zeal, that we must ascribe his original choice of his profession in the world. Born in a condition of life, calculated to raise him above the necessity of professional labour, and not less calculated to open to him the most encouraging prospect, in any of those professions, which, in our land, are deemed more honourable, because they are more gainful,—he yet chose the humble character and office, of a minister of the Scottish Church. And if the zeal which dictated a choice so uncommon, had not been found connected with that steadiness of mind, so important in the sacred office, it could have been no surprise to those, who are aware of the imperfection in this respect, that so ordinarily attaches to the human character. But the event has proved—a trial of *threescore years* has evinced—that the zeal which prompted to the choice of Dr Erskine, was that of a man *who knew himself*;—not the zeal of an enthusiastic mind, duped or betrayed by a warm imagination, but of a mind conscious of being actuated singly, by rational and established convictions, of what is most to be regarded, in this world, as connected with the certainty of a world to come.

——His zeal did not fail to manifest itself, even in matters about which the wisest and best have much differed in opinion. True to the judgment of his own mind, he zealously endeavoured, in every case, to give it practical effect in the affairs of men. But, while ardent in the support of his own opinion, he never doubted the integrity of others, however opposite their judgment, in questions of such a dubious nature. During almost thirty years of his public life, he was associated, in the charge of this congregation, with one, whose opinions were directly and actively opposed to his, in many warmly disputed questions, relating to the go-

vernment of our national church. But the mind of neither could be thereby influenced, to the smallest abatement of that mutual respect and esteem, which were so well due, in the case of both, to prominent talents and worth. They have now gone to a world, where they will learn to be in all things of the same mind. And it may this day perhaps, add to their mutual bliss, to remember, that even here, no separation of mind or opinion, could ever separate their hearts.

Dr Erskine's acquired knowledge bore a high proportion, even to the talents he had received from the hand of nature: for no man could be more sensible of the value of time; few were ever more industrious in the improvement of it. His professional knowledge, in particular, will not suffer by a comparison, even with the extended term of his life in the world: for he never thought, that in this respect, he had already attained; while practically improving his real acquisitions, it was his care to the end to increase his store. His heart was tenderly alive to the interests of the Church of Christ, wherever that name is known among men. And an extensive acquaintance with the concerns of the Christian world, much enlarged the sphere in which he endeavoured to be useful on earth. But he did not the less appear to know where his distinguishing regards were due. The religious interests of the congregation that I now address, seemed the first and the last in his mind. His delight in ministering to you, seemed the greatest of which his heart was susceptible. And he who speaks can freely testify, that the opinion he entertained of you was the pure result of that charity, "which hopeth all things, and thinketh no evil."

—The private character of Dr Erskine was formed, under the immediate influence of that pure and undefiled religion, which, in his public capacity, he taught to others. And it is important, in this view, to know and remember, what distinguishing feature it was, in the character of Dr Erskine, that so commanded the respect of all. It was his unquestionable truth and sincerity,—the singleness of mind and intention, that appeared in the whole of his conduct through life; for the good and the bad unite in pronouncing, that "in him there was no

“guile.”——The names of such men as Cuming, and Wishart, and Walker, Dick, and Robertson, and Blair, are embalmed, with the name of Erskine, in the hearts of all, who have learned, in any measure, how to value whatever has been most respectable in our Zion. God grant, that, while their memory is yet *fresh* in the mind, the men who now fill their places in the world, may catch a portion of their spirit! God grant, that, while they, like Elijah of old, may yet seem to be but dropping their mantle on the earth, their spirit also, like that of the prophet, may remain to bless the children of men.

No. III.

The following is a Correct List of Dr Erskine's Publications.

1. The Law of Nature, sufficiently promulgated to the Heathen World; or an Inquiry into the Ability of the Heathens to discover the being of a God, and the immortality of human souls; in some miscellaneous reflections, occasioned by Dr Campbell, Professor of Divinity at St Andrews's, Treatise on the Necessity of Revelation. Edinburgh, 1741. Republished in “Theological Dissertations.” London, 1765.

2. The Signs of the Times Considered; or the High Probability that the present appearances in New England, and the West of Scotland, are a prelude to the glorious things promised to the church in the latter ages. Edinburgh, 1742. Anonymous.

3. The People of God considered as all Righteous; in three sermons, preached at Glasgow, April 1745. Edinburgh, 1745. Republished in the First Volume of Dr Erskine's Discourses.

4. Meditations and Letters of a Pious Youth, lately deceased, (James Hall, Esq. son of the late Sir John Hall, Baronet, of Dunglass,) to which are prefixed, Reflections on his Death and Character, by a friend in the country. Edinburgh, 1746.

5. An Account of the Debate in the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, October 6, 1748, respecting the employment of Mr Whitefield to preach in the pulpits of the synod. Edinburgh, 1748. Anonymous.

6. A Humble Attempt to promote frequent Communicating. Glasgow, 1749. Republished in *Theological Dissertations*.

7. The Qualifications Necessary for Teachers of Christianity; a sermon before the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, October 2, 1750. Glasgow, 1750. Republished in *Discourses*, Vol. I.

8. The Influence of Religion, or National Happiness; a sermon preached at the anniversary meeting of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, in the High Church of Edinburgh, January 1756.

9. Ministers of the Gospel Cautioned against giving Offence; a sermon before the synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, November 3, 1763; to which is added, A Charge at the Ordination of the late Mr Robertson, minister of Ratho. Edinburgh, 1764. Republished in *Discourses*, Vol. I.

10. Mr Wesley's Principles Detected, or a Defence of the Preface to the Edinburgh Edition of "Aspasio Vindicated," written by Dr Erskine in answer to Mr Kershaw's Appeal; to which is prefixed the Preface itself. Edinburgh, 1765.

11. *Theological Dissertations*. (1.) On the Nature of the Sinai Covenant. (2.) On the Character and Privileges of the Apostolic Churches. (3.) On the Nature of Saving Faith. (4.) See No. 1. (5.) See No. 6. London, 1765.

12. Shall I go to War with my American Brethren? A Discourse on Judges, xx. 28, addressed to all concerned in determining that important question. London, 1769. Anonymous. Reprinted at Edinburgh, with a Preface and Appendix, and the author's name, 1776.

13. The Education of Poor Children Recommended; a sermon before the Managers of the Orphan Hospital, 1774.

14. Reflections on the Rise, Progress, and probable Consequences, of the present Contentions with the Colonies; by a Freeholder. Edinburgh, 1776.

15. *The Equity and Wisdom of Administration*, in measures that have unhappily occasioned the American Revolt, tried by the sacred oracles. Edinburgh, 1776.

16. *Considerations on the Spirit of Popery, and the intended Bill for the Relief of the Papists in Scotland*. Edinburgh, 1778.

17. *A Narrative of the Debate in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 25, 1799*. Occasioned by the apprehensions of an intended repeal of the penal statutes against Papists. With a dedication to Dr George Campbell, Principal of the Marischal College, Aberdeen. Edinburgh, 1780.

18. *Prayer for those in Civil and Military Offices recommended, from a view of the Influence of Providence on their Character, Conduct, and Success*. A sermon preached before the election of the Magistrates of Edinburgh, October 5, 1779, and published at the request of the magistrates and town-council.

19. *Sketches and Hints of Church History, and Theological Controversy*, chiefly translated and abridged from modern foreign writers. Vol. I. Edinburgh, 1790.

20. *Letters, chiefly written for comforting those bereaved of Children and Friends*. Collected from books and manuscripts. Edinburgh, 1790. 2d Edition, with Additions. Edinburgh, 1800.

21. *The Fatal Consequences and the General Sources of Anarchy*. A Discourse on Isaiah, xxiv. 1, 5; the substance of which was preached before the Magistrates of Edinburgh, September 2, 1792; and published at their request, and that of the members of the Old Greyfriars Kirk Session. Edinburgh, 1793.

22. *A Supplement to Two Volumes, published in 1754, of Historical Collections, chiefly containing late remarkable instances of Faith Working by Love*; published from the manuscripts of the late Dr John Gillies, one of the ministers of Glasgow, with an Account of the Pious Compiler, and other additions. Edinburgh, 1796.

23. *Sketches and Hints of Church History, and Theological Controversy*, chiefly translated and abridged from modern foreign writers. Vol. II. Edinburgh, 1797.

24. Discourses Preached on Several Occasions, Vol. I. 2d Edition, 1798. Ditto Vol. II. Posthumous—prepared for the press, and published by Sir H. Moncreiff Wellwood, 1804.

25. Dr Erskine's Reply to a Printed Letter, directed to him by A. C.; in which the gross misrepresentations in the said Letter, of his Sketches of Church History, in promoting the designs of the infamous sect of the Illuminati, are considered. Edinburgh, 1798.

Books Edited and Prefaced by Dr Erskine.

1. *Aspasio Vindicated, or the Scripture Doctrine of imputed Righteousness defended against the Animadversions, &c. of Mr Wesley; with a Preface of ten pages by Dr Erskine.* Edinburgh, 1765.

2. *An Account of the Life of the late Reverend Mr David Brainerd, &c. by Jonathan Edwards.* Edinburgh, 1765.

3. *An Essay on the Continuance of immediate Revelations of Facts, and Future Events, in the Christian Church, by the Reverend Mr Thomas Gillespie, Minister of the Gospel at Dunfermline; together with a letter by the late Mr Cuthbert, Minister at Culross, on the danger of considering the influences of the Spirit as a rule of duty; with a Preface by Dr Erskine.* Edinburgh, 1774.

4. *A Treatise on Temptation, by the Reverend Mr Thomas Gillespie, Prefaced by Dr Erskine.* Edinburgh, 1771.

5. *A History of the Work of Redemption, by the late Mr Jonathan Edwards.* 8vo. Edinburgh, 1774.

6. *Sermons on various important subjects, by Jonathan Edwards.* 12mo. Edinburgh, 1785.

7. *Dying Exercises of Mrs Deborah Prince, and Devout Meditations of Mrs Sarah Gill, daughters of the late Reverend Mr Thomas Prince, Minister of the South Church, Boston, New England, 1785.*

8. *Six Sermons by the late Reverend Thomas Prince, A. M. one of the ministers of the South Church in Boston, published from his manuscripts, with a Preface by Dr Erskine, containing a very interesting account of the Author, of his son who predeceased him, and of three of his daughters.*

9. *Practical Sermons by Ditto, 8vo. 1788.*

10. *Twenty Sermons by Ditto on various subjects.* Edinburgh, 1789.

11. *A Reply to the Religious Scruples against Inoculating the Small-Pox, in a letter to a Friend, by the late Reverend Mr William Cooper of Boston, New England.* Edinburgh, 1791.

12. *The Safety of Appearing at the Day of Judgment in the Righteousness of Christ, opened and applied, by Solomon Stoddard*

pastor to the Church of Northampton, in New England, the grandfather, and predecessor of Mr Jonathan Edwards. Edinburgh, 1792. Fourth Edition. With a Preface, containing some account of him, and an acknowledgment of the unscripturalness of some of his sentiments.

13. *Miscellaneous Observations on important Theological Subjects*, by the late Mr Jonathan Edwards. Edinburgh, 1793.

14. *Sermons and Tracts* ; separately published at Boston, Philadelphia, and now first collected into one volume, by Jonathan Dickenson, A. M. late President of the College of New Jersey. Edinburgh, 1793.

15. *A Sermon preached on the Fast Day, 28th February 1794*, at the French Chapel Royal, at Saint James's ; and at the Royal Crown Court, Soho, by Mr E. Gilbert, translated from the French by a young lady, Dr Erskine's grand-daughter, lately dead, (daughter of Charles Stuart, M. D.) with a short Preface by Dr Erskine. Edinburgh, 1794.

16. *Remarks on Important Theological Controversies*, by Mr Jonathan Edwards, 1796.

17. *Select Discourses by Eminent Ministers in America*, 2 Vols. Edinburgh, 1796.

18. *Religious Intelligence, and Seasonable Advice from Abroad, concerning Lay-Predaching, and Exhortation*, in four separate pamphlets. Edinburgh, 1801.

19. *Discourses on the Christian Temper*, by J. Evans, D. D. with an account of the Life of the Author, by Dr Erskine. Edinburgh, 1802.

20. *New Religious Intelligence*, chiefly from the American States. Edinburgh, 1802.

NOTES.

Note A, p. 2.

BECAUSE Lord Cardross was accused of giving countenance to meetings of Presbyterians for religious exercises, in private families, in the vicinity of Cardross, which were stigmatized as conventicles ; and because two Presbyterian ministers had been found in his house, one of whom was the private tutor of his sons ; he was first imprisoned for four years ; he was then severely fined ; a garrison was afterwards placed in the house of Cardross, which kept possession of it for eight years, and which completely demolished both the house and gardens. And because he could not pay the exorbitant fine, so tyrannically imposed, when he was liberated from prison, he was publicly outlawed ; his liferent interest in his whole estate was forfeited to the King ; and was afterwards conveyed, as a gift from the Crown, to a nephew of the Duke of Lauderdale.

Note B, p. 4.

Among many anecdotes of his loyalty to the House of Hanover, the following incident, which occurred in 1715, may be mentioned.

He had suspected that a young gentleman, in whom he was particularly interested, had allowed himself to be seduced by the agents of the Pretender ; and there could scarcely have been any event, among his personal friends, which he would have contemplated with more vexation or impatience. He had watched his conduct from the time when his suspicion had been awakened ; and at last discovered that he had fixed on a particular day, for setting out to join the rebel army. On the morning of that day, to the astonishment of his friend, he was in his bed-room by five o'clock, and found him already equipped for his journey. He told the young gentleman, in a tone of the most determined resolution, that though he would have reasoned the matter fairly

with him, if he had been consulted, as his experience, and the interest he had always taken in him, entitled him to expect; he found it necessary to follow a different course, with a headstrong young man, who seemed prepared to hazard every thing, in defiance of all good counsel; and that, for that time at least, if he accomplished his purpose, it must be over his body.

This remonstrance from one, who had always been regarded with respect and deference, was fortunately effectual. This young friend not only relinquished his purpose at the moment, but from that time abandoned every idea of swerving from his allegiance to the family on the Throne.

Note C, p. 4.

King William had always regarded Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine with esteem and confidence. And when, after his establishment on the Throne, he asked his confidential servants to give him a list of his friends in Scotland, whom he ought to provide for, and, on receiving it, was surprised that he did not find in it the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine, he was told that his name could not be inserted, because he had refused to take the oath of abjuration. "It may be so, (replied King William,) but I know Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine to be a firmer friend to the government, than many of those who have taken that oath."

His Majesty would not permit him to be, for such a reason, neglected; and his nephew, commonly known by the description of the *White* Colonel Erskine, to distinguish him from his uncle, (who, from his complexion, was called the *Black* Colonel,) was appointed governor of Stirling Castle at this time, under the condition that his uncle should receive the emoluments of the station. This situation had before been held by the great-grandfather of the present Dr Stuart of Dunearn, at the time when his brother, Alexander Earl of Moray, was secretary to King James, and a Catholic. Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine, who now held it for his uncle, was the father of the late Sir William Erskine, so highly distinguished as a military man, in the course of the present reign.

In a late edition of the Scotch Peerage, Lieutenant-

Colonel Erskine of Carnock is mentioned, as having been a supporter of the *union* of Scotland with England. This is probably a mistake, taken from his known attachment to the Revolution. It is rather believed, that in this question, as well as with regard to the oath of abjuration, he differed from those, with whom he was commonly united; and like many others, among the old Presbyterians, though he did not actively oppose, was not inclined to favour the union.

Note D, p. 5.

The same spirit which led him to resist the encroachments of tyranny in the government, rendered him equally firm in opposing whatever he considered as illegal or oppressive in private life; and the following anecdote may be mentioned as a singular specimen. The road, leading from Edinburgh to Queensferry, formerly went diagonally through the park of Barnton, by a much shorter and more direct line than the present road. To accommodate the proprietor of Barnton, the present line was adopted, without due attention, as Colonel Erskine believed, either to the forms of law, or the rights and convenience of the public.—To this innovation he never would personally submit. In travelling between Edinburgh and his house in the country, he uniformly alighted at the enclosures of Barnton; and, with the assistance of his servant, made a gap in the wall, at each extremity, so as to effect his access and his exit by the old road.

Note E, p. 5.

The following anecdote may suffice as a specimen. It was received many years ago, by the writer of this narrative, from a gentleman who had access to be intimately acquainted with all the parties. During the last ten or twelve years of Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine's life, he was occasionally afflicted with asthma, which he endured with considerable impatience. He had an attack of this kind, at a time when the magistrates of Culross, where he resided, were burning kelp on the shore, immediately below his residence. Imagining that his complaint was irritated by the smoke of the kelp, he sent peremptory orders to put out the fires, to which

the magistrates were not disposed to submit. Too much provoked to consider either their rights or his own, he resolved to extinguish the fires with his own hand. Unable to walk, he mounted his horse, and made his grandson, (the subject of this narrative, who was then at his house, a youth about the age of fourteen,) march before him, along the steep descent of the street of Culross, with his grandfather's sword drawn, in his hand—a circumstance, which, to those who were afterwards acquainted with the venerable figure of Dr Erskine, must present a very singular picture.

The magistrates, not willing to acquiesce in the Colonel's encroachment on their privileges, assembled their retainers, and fairly took him and his grandson prisoners. His passion had soon sufficiently subsided, to enable him to address the magistrates, in the following terms: “This is all nonsense, gentlemen, and we are all in the wrong. Come along to the inn, and we shall all dine together, and forget this folly.” They accompanied him without hesitation. He treated them with the best dinner which the inn afforded; and the afternoon was spent in perfect good humour and cordiality.

On this occasion, the irritability of his temper brought him into a situation sufficiently ludicrous. But as soon as the opposition which he met with gave fair play to his understanding, his passion, as usual, subsided as quickly as it had risen.

Note F, p. 8.

Lieutenant-Colonel Erskine has been sometimes mentioned as a successful agriculturist. Though the agriculture of Scotland was certainly, in his time, in a very imperfect state, and all that he did would have been thought inconsiderable in later times; yet, the estate of Tulliallan, which belonged to him, still attests both his zeal and his success as a planter. What was remarkable, he is said never to have protected a tree by a fence. But every shepherd in his neighbourhood knew that he was watched; and was the more on his guard, that the Colonel was commonly the executioner of his own sentences, for trespasses within his plantations. He is honourably distinguished in the “*Transactions of Scottish Agriculture*,” about the year 1720.

Note G, p. 23.

Sir John Pringle had enjoyed the Society of Edinburgh, while he continued in the University; and partial, in the end of his life, to his early associations, he formed the idea of returning to Edinburgh, after he had retired from his medical practice, and from his situation as president of the Royal Society, with a view to enjoy the literary intercourse of the few friends or pupils of his early years, who were still alive, and resident in Edinburgh.

He bought a house, and established himself in the New Town of Edinburgh, with the intention of remaining there, during the rest of his life. But his habits had been so long formed on the extended scale of the literary society of London; where he had a perpetual succession of men of letters, or of those who assumed that distinction, who were disengaged from business, and were always ready to attend the evening meetings for literary conversation; that he soon found it impossible to possess the same advantages at Edinburgh, or to collect around him the society which he preferred, on the same terms.

He opened his house in the evenings; and expected to find himself surrounded, as he had been at London, by those who had any pretensions to literary distinction, or any wish to attain it. His old friends and pupils regarded him with the highest respect and kindness. They saw him often; and all of them probably appeared at one or other of his evening parties. But neither their occupations, nor their private habits, would permit them to be frequently there: And there was no succession of younger men, sufficiently known to him, or sufficiently eager for literary conversation, independent of the usual concomitants of convivial intercourse. He found it therefore impossible to carry on his evening conversation parties, with any thing like the same spirit, which had supported them in London. Though he received every possible attention from his personal friends; because he had not the crowded society to which he had been so long accustomed, he felt as if he had been completely deserted.

This might have been easily foreseen, from the com-

paratively small number of his original associates who survived; and from the impossibility of attracting younger men, to a species of intercourse, so remote from their ordinary habits.

An attempt of the same kind would perhaps succeed better at present; though it would still be confined within a narrow circle.

Sir John Pringle found his plan utterly impracticable. And his habits had been so long formed on the society of London, that, after remaining at Edinburgh during the course of a single winter, he abandoned his design of residing in Scotland altogether, and returned to London.

Note H, p. 46.

The quotation referred to is in these words: ‘ Itaque
 “ et adhuc sum in illa sententia, quod infelix, et religioni
 “ atque humano generi parum utilis vel honorificus;
 “ addo, et iniquus est labor, principes ingeniorum, et
 “ præstantissimos totius antiquitatis viros, invitos ac re-
 “ pugnantes trahere in Societate Atheanum, et univer-
 “ sum ethnitismum confundere, cum Spinosismo at-
 “ que Atheismo; cum apostolus quoque in Ethnicis
 “ non tam desideret cognitionem Dei, quam quod
 “ Deum ex operibus cognoscebant, non tanquam Deum
 “ honore sunt honore prosecuti.” Jo. Alb. Fabricius,
 on the Truth of Christianity, Cap. viii.

Note I, p. 60.

Dr Hurd had expressed his dissatisfaction with the terms in which Warburton had spoken of Francis Hutcheson, in his “ Divine Legation;” and Warburton replies to him in the following words: “ The passage
 “ (Vol. V. p. 278.) is justly reproveable. The word
 “ *Hutcheson* slipped my pen before I was aware. I
 “ aimed only at his followers or disciples, *now* of Glas-
 “ gow, by whom I have been but scurvily used: and
 “ though I was told it was by the example of their
 “ master, I did not intend to give him a personal stroke;
 “ though his giving so much vogue to Shaftesbury’s
 “ system has hurt the science of morals; and his giving

“ so much credit to Shaftesbury’s book has done dis-
 “ credit to religion.” Letters between Warburton and
 Hurd, (Letter, July 11, 1751,) p. 82.

Note K, p. 61.

One of those philosophical divines, preaching in a country church, where his audience were not philosophers, had said so much in his sermon, after Lord Shaftesbury, about *the harmony of the passions*, and had so often repeated this absurd and unintelligible jargon, that a countryman, perfectly unable to affix any reasonable meaning to what he had heard, said to his companions, as he was leaving the church, intending to express the only idea which had been conveyed to him, *That till that day he had never known that there was a fiddle within his own belly!*

Note L, p. 84.

After having said so much of Mr Hall, there is perhaps no better way, to give a just view of his character, than to insert the following extract, from a discourse, written by him, in the month of August, immediately preceding his death; which appears entire in Dr Erskine’s publication; and which, considering the age of the writer, (not much more than twenty-one,) exhibits a soundness of understanding, and a sobriety of mind, joined to the most fervent piety, sufficient to justify all that has been said of him; and which, if his life had been preserved, must have held out the most flattering promise of usefulness and distinction. “ Ministers,” he says, “ should be diligent in their work, that they may
 “ be an example to their brethren in the ministry.
 “ Example, it is commonly said, is better and more effective than precept; and, indeed, in the present case,
 “ it holds very true. Nothing has a greater tendency to
 “ stir up one minister, than to see another who serves the
 “ same master, and is employed about the same work,
 “ diligent and painful. The perusal of the lives of
 “ faithful ministers is often blessed to provoke the zeal
 “ of others. But how much more may be expected
 “ from a living example. ‘ Your zeal, (saith the apostle
 “ Paul to the Corinthians,) hath provoked very many;’

“ meaning that it had happily kindled in others the
 “ same celestial flame. Happy were it, if there were no
 “ contentions among them, but who should be most
 “ forward and active in promoting the interests of their
 “ common Lord.—A zealous and diligent minister is
 “ an unspeakable blessing, not only as it may be expect-
 “ ed he will be useful to his common audience, but be-
 “ cause he will in all probability be a mean of stirring up
 “ others, who are employed in the same work with him-
 “ self. It is not easy for a minister to be very singular,
 “ though it even be in what is good.”

Note M, p. 97.

It ought to be admitted at the same time, that the contracted system, by which the ministers in the secession had prohibited their followers, under the pain of ecclesiastical censures, from holding Christian communion, in any circumstances, with the established church ; or of being even occasional hearers of any of her parish ministers ; renders their conduct with regard to Mr Whitefield, at least consistent with the policy which they had before adopted. It can afford no vindication of the intemperate language which they applied to him ; but it points out the leading circumstances which led them to employ it.

They had represented the corruptions of the church as so inveterate and incurable, that the people were no longer to expect, either evangelical instruction or edification, in the communion of the church. And when they heard the astonishing effects produced by Mr Whitefield's labours represented as the revival of religion, within that church, which they were daily decrying as completely corrupt and inefficient, they clearly saw, that they must either ascribe those effects to some other agency than the power of God, or acquiesce in the conclusion which multitudes of the people deduced from them ; that their declamations against the efficacy of religious ordinances within the established church, were either originally unfounded, or had become at last untenable. They felt the force of this consideration ; but, in escaping from the dilemma to which it reduced

them, they had recourse to the worst expedient which it was possible to have adopted. By representing Mr Whitefield as *the agent of the devil*, they went so far beyond the mark, as completely to defeat their own purpose. Had they imputed his success to the enthusiasm of his followers, or to other natural causes, they would have found many coadjutors within the established church, who had no partiality for the secession. But when they went so far as to impute to infernal agency, what had so little affinity with the works of the devil, they lost more in the esteem of the public, by this single circumstance, than by any other event which had occurred, since the date of the secession.

The seceding ministers of the present time, as conscientious as their predecessors, but much better informed, have no occasion to have recourse to such unhallowed expedients. They rest their influence where alone it can be safe; on their fidelity as Christian pastors, and on their growing liberality to every order of their brethren.

Note N, p. 102.

Among other anecdotes related of his powers of persuasion, the following may be mentioned, though it has not much connection with his success in promoting the influence of religion. On one occasion, when he was preaching at Dunfermline, a gentleman of some consideration in that town, who had never before attended him, and who did not regard the character he had heard of him with any partiality, from mere curiosity was resolved for once to be his hearer. But as Mr Whitefield was then making his collections for the Orphan-house in Georgia, he said to his wife before he set out, that, as he understood that this fellow Whitefield had the talent of extracting money from his hearers, he was resolved to be secure, and would therefore empty his pockets in her presence.

When Mr Whitefield came, in the concluding part of his sermon, to plead for his Orphan-house, and was mentioning the excuses, by which men of different characters are accustomed to defend themselves, against the good works, which they have the opportunity, but

no inclination to perform ; by a singular felicity he hit on the very case of this wary gentleman : and to his astonishment said, that there were some men so obstinately hardened against Christian beneficence, that if they were at any time to be in a situation where they thought it possible that they might be persuaded to it, they took the precaution, in order to secure themselves against every impression of this kind, to empty their pockets in their own houses before they left them.

The gentleman was so completely confounded by an address so unexpected, and which came so directly home to him, that he went about among his acquaintances, and borrowed a *half-guinea* for the collection.

Though nothing could have been more apparently accidental, than Mr Whitefield's address on this occasion, it is very probable, that he had before met with similar cases, which had furnished him with the topic which was so successful. But unless he had used it with a considerable degree of delicacy, and could have given it that kind of power which eloquence alone possesses, he would have had little chance of applying it so successfully to the person in question.

Note O, p. 123.

In the Statistical Account of Scotland (Vol. V.) the parish of Cambuslang is included. And in the account of that parish, the facts connected with Mr Whitefield's labours there, are stated from p. 266 to p. 274.

The obvious intention of the writer of that account, is to fritter down all that happened there, to a level with the most common events, in which there was nothing which ought either to have excited a serious interest at the time, or which ought now to be related with any astonishment. The representation is of such a kind, that it cannot be passed over without some remarks, though it certainly is not entitled to much attention.

1. The prejudices of the writer led him to interpret by *the spirit of party*, what had certainly very little concern with party views of any description. He divides the clergy of the established church at that time, as they have often been divided since, into two parties ; into

what he chooses to call a *high* party, and a *moderate* party; and roundly affirms, that the former ascribed the appearances at Cambuslang to the influence of the Holy Spirit; while they whom he calls *the moderate* party imputed them entirely to the effects of fear and hope, sympathy and example, aided by peculiar circumstances.

This representation is not correct in any one of its assertions. The opinions of the time, or the opinions at a later period on the same subject, were by no means divided by the parties who are thus designated. Many of those, whom the writer of the account would have classed with what he calls *the high party*, gave at that time no countenance to Mr Whitefield, and were by no means satisfied with the transactions at Cambuslang, or with those who were concerned in them—some of them prejudiced against Mr Whitefield, by their hereditary scruples with regard to Episcopacy, and a greater number still, by doubts which they avowed, with regard to the character of events, of which the effects could not then be ascertained by time.

The synod of Perth and Stirling, of whom at least *two thirds* would then have been set down, by the writer of the account, with the *high party*, sent an overture to the Assembly, for censuring those ministers who had employed Mr Whitefield in their pulpits. And others (among whom was Mr Bisset of Aberdeen, the *highest* of the *high*, though he was a man of considerable talents) preached publicly against him, and most vehemently declaimed against those who employed him.

This writer, indeed, limits his statement with regard to his *high party* by adding, "*especially those clergy who attended and assisted at Cambuslang.*" These certainly countenanced Mr Whitefield, and gave the most favourable views of the occurrences which they witnessed. But whatever weight or discredit is due to their testimony, their whole number did not exceed ten or twelve individuals; a number with whom *no party* could be identified.

2. The writer of the statistical account affirms in broad language, that it is well known, that the high party of the Church of Scotland, and the seceders, are of

“ the same sentiments, in doctrine, discipline, and church government ; and that what the latter thought blameable in the established church, was also thought blameable or defective by the former, though not in the degree to justify a secession.”

For what purpose this representation was introduced into the subject, it is not very easy to see. For the author of it expressly states, that the seceders publicly imputed the effects of Mr Whitefield's labours to the agency of the devil. To unite them, therefore, with those who favoured Mr Whitefield, with whom they were more at variance on that subject, than any description of men in the country, is (to say the least) a very extraordinary mode of explaining the conduct of either. But in truth, the writer, having, from what appears in this account, a sufficient degree of contempt for both, could not resist the opportunity of classing them together, even where their opposition to each other was most distinctly marked ; leaving the discredit, which he evidently intended for both, to have its natural influence on the public mind.

But after the particulars of his statement are considered, what has he said of them at last, with regard to the points in which he says they are agreed ? “ *They are known,*” he says, “ *to have the same sentiments, in doctrine, discipline, and church government.*” But let it not be forgotten, that *all parties* in the Church, in whatever way they are divided, *are*. or *ought to be*, completely agreed with one another, and even with the *seceders*, in *doctrine*. The Confession of Faith is equally subscribed by them all, as the standard of *doctrine*. Their agreement in *discipline* ought to be equally complete ; for *there* also they have one common standard, and the same authoritative rules. There are certainly different opinions among the members of the Church, with regard to that part of ecclesiastical government which relates to the settlement of ministers. But on this point, no party in the Church was completely agreed with the seceders ; and above all, there was not a pretence for affirming, in 1793, when the Statistical Account was published, that there were then members of the Church who adopted the opinions of the seceders of 1740.

The seceders separated from the establishment, on account of the act of Assembly of 1732. It will be seen in the Appendix, how far the doctrine which they then maintained, and which they afterwards ramified and expanded, was an acknowledged doctrine, to distinguish any high party in the Church, in 1793 !

There were no doubt, in 1740, many individual members of the Church, who were ready to admit, that some of the ecclesiastical corruptions, and particularly those which affected the influence of the people at large in the settlement of ministers, specified by the seceders, did exist, though they did not hold them to be a sufficient ground for separation. This fact is alluded to by the writer in question. But this is in reality all the foundation he had, for the assertion which he has laid down so broadly, as an *admitted truism*.

3. The doctrine which the Statistical Account imputes to those whom it designates as *the moderate party*, is in substance *this*: That all the extraordinary appearances at Cambuslang were to be imputed “*to the influence of hope and fear, sympathy and example, aided by peculiar circumstances ;*” and this opinion is expressly opposed to theirs, who ascribed them to “*the influence of the Holy Spirit.*”

But did the author of this account, when he stated it, understand his own meaning ? Or did he intend to affirm, that they who ascribed the appearances at Cambuslang to the influence of the Holy Spirit, supposed that they were *miraculous* effects,—That the Holy Spirit, in producing them, operated without the intervention of natural means—or that the individuals had any other experience of his influence, than that which they received, by means of *hope and fear, and sympathy and example*, and such external circumstances, as the occasion afforded, which he employed as instruments to enlighten their understandings, or to reach their hearts ?

There is no man of sound judgment, who is sufficiently conversant with the subject, who can affix a different idea to the influence of the Holy Spirit, in rendering the preaching of the Gospel effectual for the conviction, conversion, or edification of human beings, as far as religious truths can be applied to their hopes and fears,

desires and aversions, or can be aided by sympathy or example, or by any external circumstances in the situations of the individuals to whom they are addressed, or in the capacities and talents of those who are employed in dispensing them. These are all to be regarded as means, by which the Spirit of God may operate; and their efficacy, as often as it is clearly ascertained, is to be universally ascribed to his influence.

There is no reason to imagine, that the author of the Statistical Account seriously intended to oppose his doctrine concerning the influence of hope and fear, to the Christian doctrine concerning the agency of the Holy Spirit, in rendering these affections of human nature, by such means as are employed to awaken them, effectual either for conversion or sanctification. But he was not aware of the full import or effect of his own assertions. He wished to find a marked distinction between two parties, whom he had conjured up, to give opposite accounts of the same admitted facts. In doing this, he brings from both what is substantially the same opinion, though expressed in a very different form. Nor is he much more fortunate, in his subsequent declamations, on the sermons preached at Cambuslang, as addressed more to the passions of *hope and fear*, than to the understanding; on sudden conversions, and *methodistical regeneration*. If hope and fear were the instruments of the effects produced, this is just the creed he imputes to his *moderate* party. If the impressions of hope and fear were afterwards followed in the individual, by a life of repentance and practical duty, this is just what his *high party* are represented as ascribing to the influence of God. Both his parties in this way affirm in substance the same thing. The sermons must of course have been addressed to the principles of hope and fear, but they must have had some effect on the understanding also, to render the operation of these principles in any degree either permanent or practical.

If the topics of this writer are minutely canvassed, it is easy to see how different his representation is, from what he really intended, and supposed it to be. But it is not necessary to say more on the subject.

In the mean time, let it be specially observed, that in all that he has said of the transactions at Cambuslang, the leading facts are unquestioned; and that, with all the disposition discovered to fritter them down, the number of converts at Cambuslang is even by this writer admitted to have amounted to *some hundreds*.

A much greater difficulty might perhaps occur to a dispassionate inquirer, than any which he has been able to suggest. Supposing the facts related to have been correct, how do we account for the narrow sphere within which the consequences of all those extraordinary events were limited? We see many converts within the course of a few months. But very soon we hear of nothing more of the same kind; though the same individuals continue to preach occasionally, in the same country, for many years. We naturally ask, supposing all that was extraordinary in the events before related, to have been directed by Providence, why was the same influence no longer continued by the same instruments, or why did it not operate afterwards by means of others, in the same manner? For what visible ends were such remarkable events directed, of which we see no more than the immediate effects on a few individuals? However permanent their consequences with regard to them, they were followed by none of the great and signal events, which so many anticipated, or by any change in the state of the Christian Church, which we can possibly connect with them.

All that can be said on this subject amounts to nothing more, than what resolves itself into the ignorance of man, with regard to the laws of Providence. It is clear, that no remarkable change on the state of the world was designated. But supposing the conversions at Cambuslang to have been real, (of which we can say nothing more than has been related,) the effects produced in the progress of practical religion might go much farther, than we have the means of ascertaining. The converts of that time, who persevered to the end, would leave the impression of their characters on the society in which they lived; on the families whom they left behind them; and on all those who had the means of observing the effects of genuine religion which they exemplified; while

the marked and continued testimony, given by them in private life, to the efficacy of genuine religion, might go much farther. It might operate widely during their own lives ; it may be operating still, in many forms, which our observation can never reach.

All these conclusions are indeed conjectural. But there is nothing more definite on the subject for which there can be any authority.

Note P, p. 127.

On this subject, almost all Dr Erskine's American correspondents were more sanguine than himself, though he certainly was not without his share of the same impressions. At the distance of seventy years, there can be no hazard in believing, that they all carried their views beyond what the circumstances warranted. They persuaded themselves, though with more and less confidence, that in what they considered as the revival of religion, they saw the signal given by Providence of the approaching "glory of the latter days." "The glory of the latter days" shall unquestionably be seen at last. But is there not reason to believe, that, like the great Being from whom it shall emanate, it shall approach rather "as a thief in the night," when men are least aware, than with many visible signals exhibited beforehand to announce it? Great events will certainly be connected with it. But it may well be questioned, whether it is either the intention of Providence, or the language of revelation, that these shall be so distinctly marked in their progress, as to be known *beforehand* to be the predicted signals. The prophecies already accomplished, are things revealed, which belong to us, and to our children. The prophecies which are *not yet fulfilled*, are reserved for the instruction of future generations.

Note Q, p. 134.

But why (it will be asked) ascribe so much to the labours of Mr Whitefield, whose system of doctrine was narrow and bigotted, and whose publications are full of crude and indigested materials, which bear no affinity to

genuine eloquence, or to the wonderful effects imputed to his ministry?

This question has been often asked with every expression of contempt.

From every account his sermons must have had qualities of interest and usefulness, when they were delivered, which are in a great measure lost, in what are called his "*printed works*." The publications which bear his name are, many of them, the productions of short-hand writers, who printed, without his knowledge or consent, much which he had neither said nor written.* He published many things in his early youth, which he would have gladly withdrawn as he advanced in life. And even the greatest part of what he published at last, was hastily written, and (as his friends have always said) contained a very imperfect view of what he had delivered in public. But it is not true, that every thing which he wrote is to be put on the same level. There are some of his sermons, and many of his letters—and in particular his letters addressed to the Bishop of London—which do no discredit to his memory. Though

* As one specimen of the injustice done him, it appears, that, after he was on board the ship which carried him for the last time to America, he received a copy of his last sermon at the Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road, published by a short-hand writer; and that he expressed himself in the following terms, to a correspondent, to whom he wrote immediately: "I wish you had advertised against the publisher of my last sermon. It is *not verbatim* as I delivered it. (as the publisher had probably asserted.) In some places he makes me speak false concord, and even nonsense. In others, the sense and connection are destroyed, by injudicious disjointed paragraphs; and the whole is entirely unfit for the public review. But we must suffer by the false zeal of professing friends, as well as by the inveterate malice of public avowed enemies. If one sentence is blessed to the conviction and edification of any single individual, I care not what becomes of my character, though there is no occasion to bring ourselves into needless contempt." *Whitefield's Letters*, Letter 1440. There is a note subjoined to this Letter, from which it appears, that his executors made the same complaint of a part of the posthumous sermons published in his name, and offered to indemnify the publisher if he would burn the whole impression, which comprehended a great proportion of the sermons which pass under his name. This circumstance clearly shews, that we are not entitled to judge of what his preaching was, by such publications; as the first quotation in this note proves the humble and disinterested character, with which he left Great Britain for the last time.

he did not take the time, which he thought could be better employed, to render his writings either eloquent or correct, many of them contain a variety of illustration, inferior surely to his spoken discourses, but containing nothing either useless or contemptible. He was accustomed to preach, without writing, and acquired by practice and original talents, a facility and a pathos, which it was impossible to transfuse into what was written afterwards from recollection.

That his eloquence made an impression on the wise, as well as on the vulgar, there are yet men alive, whose understandings place them on a level with the first men in this country, and whose judgment will not be questioned, to testify from their own experience.

His system was no doubt Calvinism, and perhaps not the most enlightened Calvinism. But if it was in any point narrower than it ought to have been, he had none of the extravagance, and none of the artifices, which some others of his time, who were not Calvinists, employed.

Whatever may be thought to have been either defective or exaggerated in Mr Whitefield's ministrations, a life of indefatigable exertion, and perpetual privation, like his, for no earthly prospect or advantage, and with the single view of promoting the interests of religion and morals, as he understood them, and which nothing in this world could compensate; entitle his memory to respect and reverence, from every friend of religion and humanity.

Note R, p. 139.

There is as much narrowness, if it is not bigotry, to be found in the Protestant churches, on the subject of ministerial communion, as has ever existed in any age of the Christian Church.

The Church of England does not admit to her pulpits, any individual minister from another country, however vested by the forms of his own church with the character of a lawful minister, if he has not received his ordination from an English, or an Irish bishop. If she thinks this regulation necessary to protect her from the encroachments of foreigners or sectaries, it is neither an anomalous, (for the Presbyterian Church of Scotland

has of late done the same thing,) nor a very unreasonable exertion of power.

But she is not always satisfied even with this restriction. She can exclude even those who are in the regular orders of her own communion. A bishop has been known to issue his mandate, prohibiting the use of the pulpits within his diocese, to an individual, who has been lawfully ordained by another bishop, and even who holds a rectory or vicarage in a neighbouring diocese; on the pretence, that he did not preach doctrine of which the bishop approved, though he professed to adhere to the articles of the church.

It may be fairly asked, why any individual should have the power to exclude from ministerial communion, an officiating minister of his own church, who is in full and unquestioned possession of his clerical character, and even of his benefice in the church. If he has done or said any thing, for which he ought to be deprived of his orders, or of his benefice, why is he not deprived or ejected? or if this cannot be, (from the tenure of his freehold,) why is he not suspended, by the competent authority?

The same bigotry can be applied to Christian, as well as to ministerial communion. The English exiles at Frankfort, in Queen Mary's time, made the service-book of *England* a term of communion in *Germany*, where it could have no authority whatever; and contended for it with as much pertinacity, as if it had received the sanction of Christ and the apostles, though it had been then very recently altered and new modelled by Edward VI. who was just dead. What is remarkable, they applied to John Calvin for his advice, which they did not follow, or for his sanction, which they did not obtain.

The Society in England "for Propagating the Gospel," though the direct object of their charter, as far as America was concerned, was to propagate the *Gospel among the Heathen*, (as is specially stated in the public sermons of Dr Moore, Bishop of Ely, Dr Ash, Bishop of Clogher, Dr Sherlock, Bishop of London, and others,) did, by a manifest departure from their charter, spend no small part of the sum entrusted to them, to convert, not the Heathens to Christianity, but the *Presbyterians of New England to episcopacy*—the people

of New England, whose ancestors had sought a refuge there, from the persecutions of episcopacy. From 1739 to 1748, they expended L. 8450 for this purpose, in New England alone, where there were before Christian churches nearly equal to the population: * while from pretended want of funds, they refused numerous applications for missionaries to the Indian tribes. †

There is surely no bigotry in saying, that episcopacy is not yet so completely identified with Christianity, that every other denomination is to be identified with the Heathen.

In the Life of the late Dr Watson, the venerable Bishop of Llandaff, who was unquestionably one of the most eminent men of his time, the following paragraph appears, in a letter which he addressed to Mr Maseres, Cursitor Baron of Exchequer, who had sent him a copy of his book, entitled “The Canadian Freeholder.” “By virtue of my office in the University (of Cambridge) I am a member of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts; but ever since my appointment to the Professorship of Divinity, I have resolutely refused contributing any thing towards the support of the Society; because I always believed, that its missionaries were more zealous in proselyting dissenters to episcopacy, than in converting Heathens to Christianity. This conduct of mine has been considered as exceeding strange, and has given great offence. But I had rather offend all the dignitaries of the church for ever, than act contrary to my decided judgment for an hour; and your book will now in-

* It ought to be mentioned, at the same time, that, by the terms of their charter, the object of their institution was not *exclusively* the *Propagation* of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. They were to provide for the support of *a learned and orthodox clergy* in Colonies “who were wholly unprovided of a maintenance for ministers, and the public worship of God.” Even in this view of their charter, the conversion of Presbyterians to episcopacy, where the population was already fully provided with ministers and places of worship, cannot surely be admitted to have been within its original object or design.

It may indeed *be said*, that Presbyterians are not *a learned or orthodox clergy*; and as far as the argument founded on this assumption goes, it must be left to stand on its own merits.

† Mr Hobart’s Second Address, 1751, delivered at Boston.

“ form them, that my reasons for not subscribing were well founded.” *

When Mr Whitefield applied for a charter of incorporation, to a college which he proposed to erect in Georgia, which seems to have received the approbation of his majesty's ministers of the time, though under the reservation that it should be approved of by the Archbishop of Canterbury; it was resisted by the Archbishop, who would not consent to it, unless the head of the college should be a member of the Church of England, and unless the public prayers should be the Liturgy of the Church of England, or some such established form. Mr Whitefield stated, that he could not agree to either of these restrictions, because the greatest part of the collections on which the proposed institution must have depended, had come from dissenters, whom Mr Whitefield had uniformly assured, that the intended college should be founded on a broad bottom, and no other; that he had no ambition to be the founder of a college, but was bound to act the part of an honest man. The plan of a college and of a charter was in consequence abandoned, and in place of a college an academy was added to the Orphan House.

The Protestant dissenters, who had originally formed a considerable proportion of the Society in London for the Conversion of the Jews, were obliged to withdraw from the Society altogether, because many members of the Episcopal Church, whose assistance was necessary to render its funds adequate, or efficient, would not co-operate with them, or give countenance to the Society in any way, unless the management was to be entirely in the hands of the Episcopal Church, and unless it was understood that the converts were to become members of the Church of England.

The majority of English bishops, though it is hoped not the majority of the Church of England, have set themselves against the circulation of the Bible itself, unless the Liturgy of the church shall be sent along with it; and, indeed, unless the British and Foreign Bible Society shall consist exclusively of members of the Church

* Life of Bishop Watson, p. 64, 65.

of England. Happily, in this instance, they have not been listened to; and the Society, constituted, as it is, of churchmen and dissenters, have done more, by the circulation of the Bible alone, to promote the interests of genuine Christianity, than either churchmen or dissenters, or both together, had done, for centuries before.

The old Presbyterians began, in the 17th century, to torment themselves with controversies about Church Government, *and to turn the world upside down*, by pleading the *divine and exclusive* authority of presbytery, in the church of Christ.

The Church of England soon turned the tables on the Presbyterians, and pleaded against them, the divine and *exclusive* authority of Episcopacy, for which a certain proportion of her members have ever since strenuously contended.

It is hard to say, by which of the parties the argument of *divine right* was maintained with least temper, or with most bigotry. The independents came forward against both, pleading for exclusive privilege to themselves, by arguments which they maintained with as much pertinacity; and pretending to trace their claims to an authority as ancient and decisive, as that which was relied on by either of their rival sects.

It requires no great sagacity, perhaps, to discern, on which side the argument fails. It is clear that the effects of these controversies have not been for the advantage of the Christian Church. The very means which are employed to render the authority of the systems assumed irresistible, serve in many instances to weaken their influence, and (what is more to be deplored) to fix the attention of those who contend for them, on the *forms*, more than on the substance of their faith.

Note S, p. 178.

The explanation, as given by Warburton, is in the following terms: "In this, (that is, in charity,) as the same apostle tells us, are comprised all the efficacies of the foregoing graces. For, like faith, it believeth all things, it hopeth all things; like virtue, it thinketh no evil, doth not behave itself unseemly; like true

“ knowledge, it vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; like temperance and patience, it suffereth long and is kind, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, endureth all things; like godliness, it rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; and, like brotherly kindness, it envieth not, seeketh not its own. In a word, beginning then with faith, and finishing with charity, (or as the same apostle much better expresseth it, faith worketh by charity,) we come by just degrees to erect, after the divine model here given us, that heavenly edifice of Christian perfection, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building, framed fitly together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord.” Warburton’s Works, Vol. V. p. 143.

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Note T, p. 179.

The contempt which Warburton affected for Mr Hume, is sometimes amusing. As a pernicious writer, he represents him as provoking hostility, “ not so much by his abilities, as by his malice and vanity.” And the following singular passage occurs in his correspondence with Hurd. It is in a letter of September 1749. He was then writing his Julian. “ I am strongly tempted,” he says, “ to have a stroke at Hume, in parting. He is the author of a little book called “ Philosophical Essays;” in one part of which he argues against the being of a God, and in another (very needlessly you will say) against the possibility of miracles. He has crowned the liberty of the press. And yet he has a considerable post under government. I have a great mind to do justice on his argument against miracles, which I think might be done in a few words. *But does he deserve notice? Is he known among you?* (meaning at Cambridge.) Pray answer these questions. *For if his own weight keeps him down, I should be sorry to contribute to his advancement to any place, but the pillory.*” Warburton’s Letters to Hurd, September 28, 1749, p. 14.

Note U, p. 186.

Before the correspondence with Warburton is dismissed, it is necessary to take notice of a paragraph, in

one of his letters to Dr Hurd, in which Dr Erskine's name appears, with circumstances which require explanation. The letter is dated August 20, 1770; and the paragraph alluded to is in the following words: "The inclosed is from an eminent minister of Edinburgh; who disoblinded a rich advocate, his father, by going into orders; who, however, (I suppose on account of a large family,) did not disinherit him. It concerns Ossian chiefly; and he appeals to you, which made me smile. It confirms you in your opinion, that these poems are patched up from old Erse fragments." *

Dr Erskine never entered deeply into the controversy relating to the authenticity of Ossian's poems. But he had certainly given more credit to Macpherson's translation, than many other readers. Twenty years after the date of Warburton's letter to Hurd he published, in the first volume of his Sketches, "Observations on the Song of the Bards over Cuchullin;" in which he finds such striking resemblances to the language and images of scriptural poetry, that he thinks it "evident that the writer must have seen translations of some poems in the Old Testament." He thinks at the same time, that some argument for the antiquity of the poem, may be derived from its opposition to the taste of modern poets; and concludes with the following remark: "Though I cannot believe the poem *forged*, I can much less believe, with some of its warm admirers, that it is superior to Virgil, Homer, or Milton. This seems to me as great an absurdity in taste, as it would be in mathematics to assert, that a point is greater than a surface."

At the time when he mentioned the subject to Warburton, Macpherson's Ossian was more popular in Scotland than it became afterwards; and he had referred to Dr Hurd, as a man of taste, without knowing any thing of his opinion.

Warburton himself had once written to Hurd, in the following terms: "I have been extremely entertained with the wars of Fingal. It can be no cheat, for I think the enthusiasm of this specifically sublime could

* Warburton's Letters to Hurd, p. 455.

“hardly be counterfeit. A modern writer would have
 “been less simple and uniform.—Thus far had I writ-
 “ten, when your letter of Christmas day came to hand,
 “as you will easily understand by my submitting to take
 “shame on me, assuring you that I am fully convinced
 “of my false opinion, delivered just above concerning
 “Fingal. I did not consider the matter as I ought.
 “Your reasons for the forgery are unanswerable. And
 “of all these reasons, but one occurred to me; the
 “want of external evidence; and this I own did shock
 “me. But you have waked me from a very pleasing
 “dream; and made me hate the impostor, which is the
 “most uneasy sentiment of our waking thoughts.” *

This paragraph sufficiently explains what Warburton meant when he said, that Dr Erskine’s appeal to Dr Hurd “*had made him smile.*” For though he says, that what Dr Erskine had stated, was a confirmation of Dr Hurd’s opinion, it made him smile to reflect, that the reasons which had imposed at first on himself, and which Dr Erskine had urged, had been anticipated, † and as he thought refuted, by Dr Hurd. He afterwards adverts to the subject in another letter to Hurd, (September 10, 1770,) which is evidently a reply to one which he had subsequently received from him; and says, “It is certain this Mr Erskine *never read lectures on Fingal.* He is a deep divine, and only amused himself, in writing a few words on a popular subject in “Scotland.” ‡

In these paragraphs there was certainly no disrespect, either expressed or intended, for Dr Erskine; though a different construction has been sometimes put on them, from a clause which is included in the first of them, which is obviously expressed in terms not respectful to his father. Warburton speaks of *him*, as a rich advocate, whom his son had disobliged by going into orders, but who did not (on account perhaps of a large family) disinherit him for that reason.

This representation of Dr Erskine’s father is neither correct nor fair, and can only be imputed to Warbur-

* Warburton’s Letters to Hurd, p. 334, 335.

† Hurd’s Letter to Warburton. Ibid. p. 332. 333.

‡ Warburton’s Letters, p. 456.

ton's ignorance of the real characters of both. Mr Erskine was not, as he conceived him, like a rich English attorney, who, having become opulent and proud, would have disinherited his son, because he preferred the situation of a clergyman, to the more brilliant prospects of a secular profession. The father of Dr Erskine had his fortune and rank in the country, quite independent of his profession as an advocate. He was, indeed, originally averse to his son's resolution to go into the church; but was far from having ever intended to deprive him, on that account, of his natural claims on him as his eldest son. He had yielded to his inclination, when he found him connecting with it the happiness of his life; and it is certain that his acquiescence was never retracted.

Though Dr Warburton was not aware of it, Dr Erskine did not succeed to the whole of his father's estate. His father's fortune enabled him to establish two families, without injury to either. And since the subject has been brought into public view, it is but fair to mention the principles on which he appears to have proceeded.

To Dr Erskine, his eldest son, he left the original estates of his family, without any burden or incumbrance whatever. The estates which he left to his second son (who was the eldest of a second marriage) were, no doubt, in themselves of greater extent and value. But these he burdened with the payment of all his debts; which, at the time of his death, (fifty years ago,) were more than equal to one-half of their estimated value; including a jointure to his widow, who survived him many years, and the provision which he made for his younger sons. — He had become bound by his contract of marriage with his second wife, to secure to her children, whatever part of his fortune should be acquired during the subsistence of his second marriage; which ultimately became very considerable. On this, his eldest son would have had no claim, though he had been in no profession. — By a state of his affairs, in his own hand, it is clear, that he considered himself as having fairly divided his fortune, as he ought to have done, and so as to do justice to every branch of his family. There is a

minuteness and accuracy in his own statement, very honourable to his memory. It demonstrates, that he at least firmly believed, not only that his last settlements were to do justice to his eldest son, but that when the burdens left on his other estates should be deducted, he was to inherit the most valuable part of his property—The estates of Cardross and Tulliallan were certainly, in the end, of much more value than he had supposed them. But his intentions must be taken, from what clearly appears to have been his own view of their value, at the date of his family-settlements; after deducting all his debts, and the debts of his father; which, though it would be improper to specify them, were not probably much less than the original price of both these estates.—The value of the estates left to Dr Erskine, free of all debts and incumbrances, also greatly exceeded his father's computations, though not perhaps in the same proportion as some of his other landed property. But had they been sold at the time of Dr Erskine's death, at the same rate at which he had before sold one part of them, they would probably have produced a greater sum, than that at which his father had originally estimated the whole of his independent fortune.

The arrangement of Mr Erskine's property had therefore no connection whatever with the profession of his son, or with the number of *his* family, as Warburton imagined. Dr Erskine himself always affirmed, that his father had done him complete justice, and never would have permitted it to be said, that his family arrangements ought to have been different.

This statement is no longer of any importance to any branch of this respectable family. But Dr Warburton's note, written in ignorance of the circumstances to which he alluded, finds its way, where no explanation can be given. And as it was evidently intended to reflect some portion of most undeserved discredit on the memory of Dr Erskine's father, who was one of the most respectable men of his time, there is at least some propriety in stating the facts, to do away every prejudice and misrepresentation, which no individual would have more sensibly felt, than Dr Erskine himself, if such unfounded surmises had ever reached him.

Note X, p. 203.

Though it has been said, that some of the people of Northampton were, in a certain degree, prepared for the part which they took at this time, since 1744, when there had been another question about discipline, which had considerably divided them; the immediate cause of difference related to the terms of admission to the Lord's Table.—Mr Solomon Stoddart, the grandfather and predecessor of Mr Edwards, had adopted a conceit, that this institution is a *converting* ordinance; and that it is, therefore, to be administered to all who have a competent knowledge of Christian doctrine, and are not of a scandalous life, though they do not profess to have any personal religion. If he had acted up to his opinion, he should have gone farther. For even scandalous persons ought not to be excluded from a *converting* ordinance.—Mr Edwards had originally acquiesced in his grandfather's practice, but was at last convinced of its absurdity, and felt that he was bound in conscience to depart from it. Mr Stoddart had been a man of superior capacity, and in other respects, both an able and a successful minister. His talents had borne down all opposition while he lived, and he had so trained his congregation to the practice which he adopted, that when Mr Edwards proposed to depart from it, the great majority of them became not only his keen but inveterate opponents.

The difference soon became irreconcilable. One of the most active agents against Mr Edwards appears to have been (as well as himself) a grandson of Mr Stoddart. He took the lead in the opposition, and conducted it with the utmost virulence.—That this young man (for it is probable that he was not then above the age of thirty) afterwards deeply repented his conduct, is more than probable. There is a letter published by one Joseph Hawley, in 1760, (two years after the death of Mr Edwards,) who, by describing himself as an agent on this occasion, and as *his young kinsman*, who had been keen and active against him before a council of ministers, was, in all probability, the same person, though this is not

expressly stated. This letter contains the most humbling confessions and repentance, in reviewing his conduct to that venerable man, which it is possible for language to convey ; and expresses the utmost anxiety to make his repentance as public, as his conduct had been. It came too late for Mr Edwards, who had already been two years in his grave. But though it had been originally addressed to a private friend, a minister in the neighbourhood, the writer afterwards published it, that it might make some impression on others, who had been as deeply concerned as himself ; and that he might have this consolation before he died. He had carried along with him the great majority of the thoughtless multitude, who must have read his recantation as a heavy reproach to themselves.—Through his influence, and the keenness of his associates, a council of ministers, who had the whole subject submitted to them, very absurdly determined, by a majority of *one*, that Mr Edwards should resign his situation at Northampton. Mr Edwards, with an astonishing degree of mildness and magnanimity, urged nothing for himself, or against his opponents, to influence their decision ; but simply laid before them the grounds of difference, and declared himself willing to abide by their determination.—In this state he was left, with a wife, and a family of nine children, completely unprovided, and without any visible prospect at the time, of any other situation.

If all the circumstances of this case are taken together, they present to us one of the most striking pictures of human folly and injustice, on the one side ; and of conscientious fidelity, supported by Christian temper and forbearance, on the other, which have ever been exhibited.

Dr Erskine, who entered deeply into the feelings of Mr Edwards, who had communicated to him every circumstance as it occurred, appears to have afterwards suggested to him the idea of a parochial charge in Scotland, for which he promised him all his influence. Mr Edwards so far entered into his idea, as, after deliberating on the subject, to assure him, that he would have had no scruple to have subscribed the Westminster confession, if other circumstances had encouraged him to

embrace the proposal. But it occurred to him, that, had he gone to Scotland, he must have gone, while he was uncertain whether his ministrations would have been acceptable there. At the risk which he built on this uncertainty, which probably no other individual would have thought considerable, (but which, after what had happened at Northampton, he very naturally exaggerated,) it appeared to him, that he would not have been justified, in carrying a wife and nine children across the Atlantic. This proposal was therefore relinquished; and he was soon after invited to Stockbridge.

A detail of these particulars is, not surely out of its place, when it relates to a man so distinguished as Jonathan Edwards; and contains a narrative of so many extraordinary circumstances, which have been seldom mentioned.

Note Y, p. 204.

In the same letter, (of July 7, 1752,) alluding to some accounts which Dr Erskine had given him, of certain unfavourable appearances, with regard to the progress or revival of religion in Germany, he has the following paragraph, which deserves to be inserted here, as it may suggest a subject of real importance, to some person who has leisure and ability to discuss it. “I should
 “be glad to see the pastoral letter you mention, against
 “fanaticism, though written by one disaffected to the
 “revival. I wish I could see a history of enthusiasm
 “through all ages, written by some good hand; a
 “heartly friend to vital religion, a person of accurate
 “judgment, and of large acquaintance with ecclesiastical history. Such a history, well written, might
 “doubtless be exceedingly useful and instructive, and
 “of great benefit to the church of God; especially
 “if there were united with it a proper account and history of true religion. I should, therefore, choose, that
 “the work should be a history of true, vital, and experimental religion, and enthusiasm; bringing down
 “the history from age to age; judiciously and clearly
 “making the distinction, between the one and the other; observing the difference of source, progress,
 “and issue; properly pointing out the limits, and doing

“justice to each, in every age, and at each remarkable
 “period. I don’t know that there is any such thing
 “extant, or any thing that would in any good measure
 “answer the same purposes. If there be, I should be
 “glad to hear of it.”

Note Z, p. 216.

This letter deserves the more attention, that, as far as appears, it was the last which Dr Erskine received from the author; and is besides one to which Mr Edwards appears to have attached a considerable degree of importance, as containing what he considered as explanations of his doctrine, and of its practical effects, which do not appear in his book itself. They are the more important, that his deductions from his system are diametrically opposite, to the representations of some later writers, who have affected to be his disciples. The candid reader will perhaps excuse the length and prolixity of the following letter, from these considerations.

“Stockbridge, August 3, 1757.—Reverend and Dear
 “SIR, In June last I received a letter from you, dated
 “January 22, 1757, with ‘Mr Anderson’s Complaint
 “verified,’ and ‘Objections to the Essays examined.’
 “For these things I now return you hearty thanks.
 “The conduct of the vindicator of the Essays from ob-
 “jections against them, seems to be very odd. Many
 “things are produced from Calvin, and several Calvinis-
 “tic writers, to defend what is not objected against.
 “His book is almost wholly taken up with that which
 “is nothing to the purpose; perhaps only to amuse and
 “blind the common people. According to your pro-
 “posal, I have drawn up something, stating the differ-
 “ence between my hypothesis, and that of the Essays;
 “which I have sent to you, to be printed in Scotland,
 “if it be thought best; or to be disposed of, as you
 “think proper. I have written it in a letter to you;
 “and if it be published, it may be, as ‘a letter from me
 “to a minister in Scotland.’—Lord Kames’s notion of
 “God’s deceiving mankind, by a kind of invincible natu-
 “ral instinct or feeling, leading them to suppose that
 “they have a *liberty of contingency* and self-determination

“ of will, in order to make them believe themselves and
“ others worthy to be blamed or praised for what they
“ do, is a strange notion indeed ; and it is hard for me
“ to conjecture what his views could be, in publishing
“ such things to the world.

“ However, by what I have heard, some others seem
“ to be so far of the same mind, that they think, that if
“ it be really true, that there is no self determining
“ power in the will, as opposed to any such moral
“ necessity as I speak of, consisting in a certain connec-
“ tion between motives and volitions, it is of mischievous
“ tendency to say anything of it ; and that it is best that
“ the truth in this matter should not be known by any
“ means. I cannot but be of an extremely different mind.
“ On the contrary, I think the notion of liberty, consisting
“ in a contingent self-determination of the will, as neces-
“ sary to the morality of men’s dispositions and actions,
“ almost inconceivably pernicious ; that the contrary truth
“ is one of the most important truths of moral philoso-
“ phy, that ever was discussed, and most necessary to be
“ known ; and that, for want of it, those schemes of
“ morality and religion, which are a kind of infidel
“ schemes entirely diverse from the virtue and religion
“ of the Bible, and though wholly inconsistent with, and
“ subversive of the main things belonging to the gospel
“ scheme, have so vastly and so long prevailed, and
“ have stood in such strength.

“ And I think whoever imagines that he or any body
“ else shall ever see the doctrines of grace effectually
“ maintained against their adversaries, till the truth in
“ this matter be settled, imagines a vain thing. For,
“ allow these adversaries what they maintain in this
“ point, and I think they have strict demonstration
“ against us. And not only have these errors a most
“ pernicious influence in the public religious contro-
“ versies that are maintained in the world, but such sort
“ of notions have a more fatal influence, many ways,
“ on the minds of men of all ranks, in all transactions
“ between God and their souls. The longer I live,
“ and the more I have to do with the souls of men in
“ the work of the ministry, the more I see of this. No-
“ tions of this sort are one of the main hindrances of

“ the success of the preaching of the word, and other
“ means of grace, in the conversion of sinners. This
“ especially appears, when the minds of sinners are af-
“ fected with some concern for their souls, and they are
“ stirred up to seek their salvation. Nothing is more
“ necessary for men, in such circumstances, than
“ thorough conviction and humiliation ; than that their
“ consciences should be properly convinced of their real
“ guilt, and sinfulness, in the sight of God, and their
“ deserving of his wrath. But who is there, that has
“ had experience of the work of a minister, in dealing
“ with souls in such circumstances, that does not find,
“ that the thing that mainly prevents this, is men’s ex-
“ cusing themselves with their own inability ; and the
“ moral necessity of those things, wherein their ex-
“ ceeding guilt and sinfulness in the sight of God, most
“ fundamentally and mainly consist : Such as, living
“ from day to day, without one spark of true love to
“ the God of infinite glory and fountain of all good ;
“ their having greater complacence in the little vile
“ things of this world, than in him ; their living in a
“ rejection of Christ, with all his glorious benefits and
“ dying love ; and, after all the exhibitions of his glory
“ and grace, having their hearts still as cold as a stone
“ towards him ; their living in such ingratitude for that
“ infinite mercy of his laying down his life for sinners.
“ They, it may be, think of some instances of lewd be-
“ haviour, lying, dishonesty, intemperance, profaneness,
“ &c. But the grand principles of iniquity, constantly
“ abiding and reigning, from whence all proceeds, are
“ all overlooked. Conscience does not condemn them
“ for those things, because they cannot love God of
“ themselves, they cannot believe of themselves, and the
“ like. They rather lay the blame of these things, and
“ their other wicked dispositions of heart, to God, and
“ secretly charge him with all the blame. These things
“ are very much for the want of being thoroughly in-
“ structed in that great and important and certain
“ truth, that a bad will, or an evil disposition of heart
“ itself, is wickedness. It is wickedness in its very be-
“ ing, nature, and essence ; and not only the occasion
“ of it, or the determining influence that it was at first

“owing to. Some, it may be, will say, ‘they own it is their fault that they have so bad a heart; that they have no love to God, no true faith in Christ, no gratitude to him, because they have been careless and slothful in times past, and have not used means to obtain a better heart, as they should have done.’ And it may be, they are taught that they are to blame for their wickedness of heart, because they, as it were, brought it on themselves in Adam, by the sin he voluntarily committed; which sin is justly charged to their account, which perhaps they do not deny. But how far are these things from being a proper conviction of their wickedness, in their enmity to God and Christ? To be convinced of the sin of something, that long ago was the occasion of this enmity to God, and to be convinced of the wickedness of the enmity itself, are quite *two* things.

“And if persons under some awakening find the exercise of corruption of heart, as it appears in a great many ways; in their meditations, prayers, and other religious duties, and on occasion of their fears of hell, &c. &c.; still their notion of their inability to help it exercising them, keeps them from proper conviction of sin herein. Fears of hell tend to convince men of the hardness of their hearts. But then, when they find how hard their hearts are, and how far from a proper sensibility and affection on things of religion, they are kept from properly condemning themselves for it, from the moral necessity or inability that attends it. For the very notion of hardness of heart implies moral inability. The harder the heart is, the more dead in sin, and the more unable to exert good affections and acts. Thus the strength of sin is made the excuse for sin. And thus I have known many under fears of hell, justifying or excusing themselves, at least by implication, in horrid workings of enmity against God, in blasphemous thoughts, &c.

“It is of great importance that they that are seeking their salvation should be brought off from all dependence on their own righteousness. But these notions above all things prevent it. They justify themselves, and the sincerity of their endeavours. They say to them-

“ selves, they do what they can ; they take great pains ;
“ and though there be great imperfection in what they
“ do, and many evil workings of heart arise, yet these
“ things they cannot help. Here moral inability comes
“ in as an excuse. Things of this kind have visibly
“ been the main hindrance of the true humiliation and
“ conversion of sinners, in the times of awakening that
“ have been in this land, every where, in all parts, as I
“ have had opportunity to observe, in very many places.

“ When the gospel is preached, and its offers, and
“ invitations, and motives, most powerfully urged, and
“ sinners’ hearts stand out, here is their strong-hold,
“ their sheet-anchor. Were it not for this, they would
“ either comply, or their hearts would condemn them
“ for their horrid guilt in not complying.

“ And if the law of God be preached in its strictness
“ and spirituality, yet conscience is not properly con-
“ vinced by it. They justify themselves with their in-
“ ability ; and the design or end of the law, as a school-
“ master to fit for Christ, is defeated. Thus both the
“ law and the gospel are prevented from having their
“ proper effect.

“ The doctrine of a self-determining will, as the
“ ground of all moral good and evil, tends to prevent
“ any proper exercise of faith in God and Christ in the
“ affair of salvation, as it tends to prevent all depen-
“ dence upon them. For instead of this, it teaches a
“ kind of absolute independence on all those things that
“ are of chief importance in this affair ; our righteous-
“ ness depending originally on our own acts, as self-de-
“ termined. Thus, our own holiness is from ourselves,
“ as its determining cause, and its original and highest
“ source. And as for imputed righteousness, that should
“ have any merit at all in it, to be sure, there can be no
“ such thing. For self-determination is necessary to
“ praise and merit. But what is imputed from another
“ is not from our self-determination or action. And
“ truly, in this scheme man is not dependent on God ;
“ but God is rather dependent on man in this affair ; for
“ he only operates consequentially in acts, in which he
“ depends on what he sees we determine, and do first.

“ The nature of true faith implies a disposition to

“ give all the glory of our salvation to God and Christ.
“ But this notion is inconsistent with it; for it in effect gives the glory wholly to man. For that is the very doctrine that is taught, that the merit and praise is his, whose is the original and effectual determination of the praise-worthy deed. So that, on the whole, I think it must be a miracle indeed, if ever men are converted that have imbibed such notions as these, and are under their influence in their religious concerns.

“ Yea, these notions tend effectually to prevent men’s ever seeking after conversion with any earnestness. It is manifest that men never will be in earnest in this matter, till their consciences are awakened, and they are made sensible of God’s anger, and their danger of suffering the terrible effects of it. But that stupidity which is opposed to this awakening, is upheld chiefly by these two things: their insensibility of their guilt in what is past and present, and flattering themselves as to what is future. These notions of liberty of indifference, contingency, and self-determination, as essential to guilt or merit, tend to preclude all sense of any great guilt for past and present wickedness. As has been observed already, all wickedness of heart is excused, as what, in itself considered, brings no guilt. And all that the conscience has to recur to, to find any guilt, is the first wrong determination of the will, in some bad conduct, before that wickedness of heart existed, that was the occasion of introducing or confirming it. Which determination arose contingently from a state of indifference. And how small a matter does this at once bring men’s guilt to, when all the main things, wherein their wickedness consists, are passed over? And indeed the more these principles are pursued, the more and more must guilt vanish, till at last it comes to nothing, as may easily be shewn.

“ And with respect to self-flattery and presumption, as to what is future, nothing can possibly be conceived more directly tending to it, than a notion of a liberty at all times possessed, consisting in a power to determine one’s own will to good or evil; which implies a

“ power men have at all times, to repent and turn to
 “ God. And what can more effectually encourage the
 “ sinner, in present delays and neglects, and embolden
 “ him to go on in sin, in a presumption of having his
 “ own salvation, at all times, at his own command?
 “ And this notion of self dependence and self-deter-
 “ mination serves to prevent or enervate all prayer to
 “ God for converting grace; for why should men ear-
 “ nestly cry to God for his grace, to determine their
 “ hearts to that, which they must be determined to of
 “ themselves? And indeed it destroys the very notion
 “ of conversion itself. There can properly be no such
 “ thing, or any thing akin to what the scripture speaks
 “ of as conversion, renovation of the heart, regeneration,
 “ &c. if growing good by a number of self determined
 “ acts, be all that is required, or to be expected.

“ Excuse me, Sir, with troubling you with so much
 “ on this head. I speak from the fulness of my heart.
 “ What I have long seen of the prevalent notions every
 “ where, and what I am convinced will still be their
 “ consequences, so long as they continue to prevail, fills
 “ me with great concern. I therefore wish that the af-
 “ fair were more thoroughly looked into, and searched
 “ to the very bottom.

“ I have reserved a copy of this letter, and also of my
 “ other to you, * dated July 25, intending to send them
 “ to Mr Burr, to be by him conveyed by the way of
 “ New York or Philadelphia. Looking on these let-
 “ ters as of special importance, I send duplicates, lest one
 “ copy should fail. The packet in which I enclose this,
 “ I cover to Mr Gillics.—O Sir, pray for us, and pray
 “ in particular for your affectionate and obliged friend
 “ and brother, JONATHAN EDWARDS.”

This letter is not as happily written as other produc-
 tions of its respectable author. The ideas which he in-
 tended to convey, are not always clearly brought out or
 illustrated, nor is he perhaps always successful in the
 application of his doctrine. He scarcely does justice to
 Lord Kames, and the latest edition of his Lordship's
 book, if he could have seen it, would have removed the
 occasion of some of his remarks; but of this enough has

* The letter printed at Edinburgh at the end of his Inquiry.

been said already. The practical argument does not seem to bear as obviously or forcibly as Mr Edwards intended, on the metaphysical system ; and in a few instances, perhaps, some of his readers will find it difficult to perceive the precise connection between them, which was in his mind, independent of the system, of which there is no occasion to say any thing here. There is an intricacy, and an embarrassment in the composition of this letter, which lessens its general effect, and the same ideas are frequently repeated, without adding much to the illustrations intended.

But this letter certainly contains a striking memorial of the author's sincerity in the doctrine which he maintained, as well as of the extensive knowledge which he possessed, both of the human heart and of practical religion. If his metaphysical statement is intricate or incomplete, his facts at least are incontrovertible.

Note AA, p. 259.

Mr Wesley did not merely affirm, that a life of sinless perfection is attainable in this world, but that every sincere believer actually attains it ; that a true living faith is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and a freedom from all present sins. (Journal from 1st, February 1738, to his return from Germany, 2d edition, p. 29.) He examines a number of individuals in the neighbourhood of Leeds, from whom he learns, 1. That they feel no inward sin, and to the best of their knowledge commit no outward sin ; and, 2. That they see and love God every moment, and pray, and rejoice, and give thanks evermore. (Journal from 17th June 1758, to 5th May 1760, p. 933.) He says of himself, " This I know, and I sin not to-day ; and Jesus my master, " has forbid me to take thought for to-morrow. I have " constant peace ; not one uneasy thought ; and I have " freedom from sin, not one unholy desire." (Ibid. p. 31, 32.) He says besides, " None can have true faith, without knowing that he hath it ; for whosoever hath it, is " freed from sin. The whole body of sin is destroyed " in him." (Journal from his embarking for Georgia, till his return. 2d Edition, p. 70.)

That Mr Wesley affirmed miracles to have been

wrought in support of his own mission, is manifest from his letter to the Bishop of Gloucester. (p. 65 69.) He supposes himself to be asked, "If miracles have not ceased, why do you not prove your mission thereby?" and he replies, "As your Lordship has frequently spoke to this effect, I will now give a clear answer. And first, I acknowledge that I have seen with my eyes, and heard with my ears, several things which, to the best of my judgment, cannot be accounted for by the ordinary course of natural causes, which I therefore believe ought to be ascribed *to the extraordinary interposition of God*. If any man choose to style these miracles, I reclaim not. I have diligently inquired into the facts. I have weighed the preceding and following circumstances. I have strove to account for them in a natural way, but could not, without doing violence to my reason. Not to go far back, I am clearly persuaded, that the sudden deliverance of John Haydon was one instance of this kind, and my own recovery on May 10th, another. I cannot account for either of these in a natural way; therefore I believe they were both supernatural. I must, secondly, observe, That the truth of these facts is supported by the same kind of proof as that of all other facts is wont to be, namely, the testimony of competent witnesses; and that the testimony here is in as high a degree, as any reasonable man can desire.—We are ready to name the persons, on whom the power was shewn, which belongeth to none but God, (not one, or two, or ten or twelve only;) to point out their places of abode; and we engage they shall answer every pertinent question fairly and directly; and if required, shall give all these answers upon oath, before any who are empowered to receive them."

If all this was not a specimen of complete fanatical delusion, it was something less respectable. But it is useless to make remarks, where the natural conclusion is so obvious.

On the other hand, though there are points both in doctrine and practice, on which Mr Wesley published opinions which will not stand the test of dispassionate examination, it may be conceded notwithstanding, that

in many situations the Wesleyan Methodists have done good service to practical religion. Whatever their mistakes have been, their indefatigable activity, their self-denial and privations at home and abroad, their anxious solicitude to gain the attention of great multitudes, especially among the lower orders of the people, to the substantial interests of religion and eternity; and the visible effects of their labours, to enlighten the ignorant, to rouse the thoughtless, and to reclaim the profligate, it would be equally uncandid and unjust to dissemble. The founder of their sect was undoubtedly a man of talents, and the zeal with which he exerted himself in the Christian ministry cannot be denied. It is not indeed always easy to separate from the sincerity of his labours, the artifice and management in which the spirit of religion had little concern, which is sometimes intermixed with them. Mr Wesley unquestionably fell into mistakes, both in his conduct and opinions, which, though they may be explained away or palliated, it is impossible to vindicate. But amidst all his defects, it must be admitted, that his own activity, and the labours of his sect among the people, however obnoxious, as a dissent from an established church, have produced effects in favour of religion and morals, for which they are entitled to the respect and gratitude of the Church of Christ.

Note BB, p. 402.

Two examples will illustrate this representation. On one occasion, when Dr Erskine was making a reply in an Ecclesiastical Court, he had said of a speaker who had preceded him, that "the strength, or rather the *weakness*, of his argument consisted in this," mentioning the point to which he alluded. His heart smote him, after he sat down, for having so applied the word *weakness*; and he lost not a moment before he asked pardon for having done so, in terms of the most affectionate respect, though it was evident to all who were present, that no offence whatever had been taken.

On another occasion, he accidentally met on the street, his near relation and friend, the late Sir William Erskine, so eminently distinguished as a military officer, both in Europe and America. Their estates were con-

terminous ; and some dispute had arisen between their tenants. Sir William introduced the subject, with considerable keenness ; and Dr Erskine had begun to reply, with a degree of warmth which seemed to attract the attention of spectators. Sir William was the first who observed the attention they were exciting ; and he immediately whispered to his friend, “ You and I, Doctor, have both too much of the old colonel, to settle this dispute on the street of Edinburgh. I shall dine with you to-morrow, and we shall soon settle it in your house.” This he did ; and they met next day, and adjusted their slight difference, with perfect good humour and cordiality.

Note CC, p. 410.

It will not perhaps be useless, to mention generally, the preparatory studies and qualifications required in candidates for the ministry, in the Church of Scotland. They were at all times in substance what they are at present ; and it will be sufficient for the purpose of this note, to mention the general law on the subject, as it now stands, without taking notice of minute regulations, originating in particular cases, and introduced at different times.

A young man, intended for the Church, after completing his education at a grammar school, is required, before he enters on the study of theology, to attend a university for at least four years. During that time, he is supposed to complete his studies in the Greek and humanity classes, and afterwards to apply to the study of logic, moral philosophy, and natural philosophy ; taking along with these, any other branch of knowledge, with which the university furnishes him, subservient to his studies in these different departments.

He is not allowed to become a student in theology, till he has completed the course of literature and philosophy. He is then placed in the divinity college ; and besides the prelections in theology, which he must attend, he has also to study in the classes of church history and oriental languages.

This course of study in theology requires an attend-

ance of four years ; and till it is completed, he cannot be received on probationary trials, or receive a license to preach.

If his attendance on the divinity college has not been uniform or regular, a longer period of study is required. But in all ordinary cases, a license to preach cannot be applied for, till after the study of at least eight years, (including the classical and philosophical course,) at one or other of the universities.

After this time, a young man is proposed to the presbytery, under which he resides, as a proper person to be received on probationary trials, with a view to his receiving the character of a preacher ; and he must then produce regular certificates from the university, not only of his attendance during the time prescribed by law, but of his good character, and of his having performed the exercises required in the divinity college. The proposal of receiving him on trials must lie at least a month on the table, before it is considered, that time may be given to inquire into the character of the candidate. If at the next meeting there is no objection made to him, he is then examined, either by the presbytery, or by a committee, on the whole extent of his preparatory studies ; on his classical, philosophical, and theological knowledge. This examination is intended to be private ; and if the candidate does not acquit himself to the satisfaction of his *private* examiners, he is remitted by them to his studies, and his name is not again mentioned to the presbytery till he becomes better informed. If, on the other hand, the candidate appears to possess the requisite information, the presbytery, before they take any other step, is then obliged to write circular letters, to every presbytery within the bounds of the synod to which it belongs, intimating the intention of taking the young man on probationary trials, if the consent of the synod shall be obtained. This must be done, at least two months before the meeting of the synod. If the synod, from any thing supposed doubtful or exceptionable in the character of the candidate, shall refuse to consent, the measure cannot be persisted in by the presbytery, though there may be an appeal to the Assembly.

It is scarcely conceivable, that better or more effectual

precautions can be taken, to prevent the reception of improper persons, on probationary trials.

But after all this has been done, if the synod allows the candidate to be received, his qualifications are still to be tried. Five discourses at least are prescribed to him, which he has to deliver in public before the presbytery; one of them a Latin, and another a Greek exercise; one an exposition of a portion of scripture, and two discourses on scriptural texts. He is then publicly examined on his knowledge of theology, church history, Greek and Latin; or, according to a late practice, these questionary trials are taken before the public discourses. And it is not till he has acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the presbytery, on every one of these points of trial, that he can receive a license to preach.

No institution administered by human beings is so perfect as not to fail in particular instances. But there is no church in Christendom, in which more effectual precautions are taken, to prevent the introduction of improper persons into the clerical functions.

After a candidate has been licensed to preach, he is not put into full orders, till he is to be inducted into a parochial charge; and this is not done, till he submits to a new trial of his qualifications, before the presbytery, within whose jurisdiction the parish, to which he is presented, is situated. The substance of the trials prescribed for ordination, is the same, with those which are required for a license to preach.

Note DD, p. 410.

The establishment of parochial schoolmasters in every part of the kingdom has given the great body of the people of Scotland advantages, which no other country in Europe has hitherto possessed in the same degree. And for these advantages, Scotland is exclusively indebted to the administration under King William.

In 1693, an act of parliament, entitled "An Act for Settling the Quiet and Peace of the Church," *inter alia* "declared, That all schoolmasters and teachers of youth in schools, are, and shall be liable to the trial, judgment, and censure of the presbyteries of the

“ bounds, for their sufficiency, qualifications, and deportment, in the said office.”

This legislative provision secured a leading point in the system of Scotch education, the qualifications of the persons entrusted with the management of schools.

But the whole system was arranged and completed by another act of the parliament of Scotland in 1696, which provided, that there should be a parochial school and schoolmaster in every parish of the kingdom, with a fixed salary, payable by the landholders, in proportions, taken from the valued rent of their landed estates ; and giving the schoolmaster the power of recovering his salary by legal diligence. The schoolmaster was also authorized to exact fees from the scholars ; and when these, moderate as they always were, were added to the salary, while no unreasonable burden was laid on the parishioners, (who, excepting paupers, could all afford to pay what was demanded, without any material hardship,) the provision made for the schoolmasters was, at that time, by no means inadequate, or disproportioned to the expence of living.

The system which was established by means of these acts of parliament, has attained its object so completely, that for more than a century after the enactments, the great body of the people have been better educated in Scotland, than in any other division of Christendom. The power to read and write, and an acquaintance with the elements of arithmetic, was placed within the reach of almost every individual ; while all orders of the people have been taught to read the Bible from their earliest years, and with the assistance of the catechisms regularly taught in every school, have received the rudiments of a religious education, such as they could not have had the same means of obtaining, in any other country of the world.

Besides these advantages, for the greatest part of the last century, there were few parishes, in which the schoolmasters were not qualified to give instruction in the Latin language, to such as were desirous to receive a grammar school education ; and a very considerable number of individuals throughout the kingdom have,

from 1696, down to the present time, been prepared for the universities, in the schools of the parishes where they were born.

From all these circumstances, the parochial schools of Scotland must be considered by every dispassionate man, as having secured advantages of incalculable value, to the great mass of the inhabitants: Advantages, which have added as much to the comfort and capacities of those who have remained at home, as they have contributed to give respectability and distinction to those who have resorted to other countries.

The change which time has produced on the value of money, has no doubt reduced the emoluments of the schoolmasters, below the proportion which they ought to have preserved, to the progress of other situations; and has of necessity had a natural effect to lower the qualifications of those, who were willing to accept of them.

Under this persuasion, they who took the management of Scotch affairs, obtained a new act of parliament in 1803, which was intended to add to the emoluments of the schoolmasters, and to render their situations more independent and respectable.

But the inconsiderable addition which was made by this act to the salaries, has not gone far to remedy the evil; and some new regulations contained in it, have injured rather than improved the establishment.

If the parochial schools are to be supported, so as to answer their original design, the gentlemen and clergy of Scotland will soon find it necessary to apply for a new act of parliament, to prevent the advantages which have added so much to the prosperity, and to the character of their country, from being lost or impaired to their posterity.

Note EE, p. 411.

To those who are unacquainted with the nature of church benefices in Scotland, it may be useful to mention, that besides his stipend, which, with the exception of burghs, is paid in general from the tithes, according to a certain modification, (which it would require more room to explain than can be given in a note,) every minister of a country-parish, has a right to a manse (a parson-

age-house) and a glebe, furnished at the expence of the heritors. The glebe must consist of at least four acres of arable land, and as much grass land as is sufficient for the sustenance of two cows and a horse. The heritors are bound to build the manse, and keep it in repair, at the sight of the presbytery of the district. But the sentences of the presbyteries relative to manses and glebes, are all subject to the review of the Court of Session. It ought also to be mentioned, that where there is a deficiency of tithe, a late act of parliament has given from the consolidated fund, a sum sufficient to raise the lowest parochial stipends in Scotland, to the annual value of L. 150.

Note FF, p. 413.

It will be seen from a foot note, afterwards inserted, * that the superintendence of the clergy by the presbyteries, the synods, and the General Assembly, is equally watchful and efficient, both with regard to their personal conduct, and their pastoral functions. The superintendence of the morals of the people at large is placed under the appellent jurisdiction of the same ecclesiastical courts; but is primarily entrusted to the kirk-session of each parish, from whose sentences there lies an appeal to the Superior Courts. In cases of peculiar atrocity, however, the kirk-sessions are required to consult the presbyteries, and receive their instructions, before they take any steps with a view to judicial proceedings. And in some instances, they must go back to the presbyteries, before they pronounce a final sentence.

Note GG, p. 428.

Mr Lockhart of Lee was the person claiming the patronage, whose presentation the presbytery sustained. His predecessors had been infest in the patronage since the year 1647. In 1708, when the last vacancy occurred, though the family could not then by law present to the benefice, as the act 1690 was in force, they had exercised the right of the patron to dispose of the vacant stipend, (which that act had not taken away,) without

* In pages 475, 476.

question or resistance. On the other hand, it was not pretended, that, since 1647, when they were infest in the patronage, the Crown, who now claimed it, had one act of possession to plead. The family of Lee and their authors were the only patrons whom the presbytery found on their record.

After the right of patronage had been decided, and the question relating to the induction of the minister came before the Court of Session, it was pleaded for Mr Lockhart of Lee, or rather for his presentee, that every patron in possession is entitled to retain and enjoy his patronage, till he is legally dispossessed; that from the documents produced to the presbytery, added to those which were found on their own record, he had a legal right to present to the vacant benefice; and that even though his right was challenged before collation was given, his presentation was notwithstanding legally entitled to be made effectual for *that vice*, and could not be rendered invalid *after execution*, by any subsequent decree setting aside his right of patronage. In support of this doctrine were quoted, “Lambertinus De jure patronatus, Lib. ii. Part 1, “Quæst. 3. Art. 4.—Jacob’s Law Dictionary.—Reg. “Maj. Lib. 3 cap. 33.”

It was pleaded, on the same side of the bar, for the presbytery, that they had complied with the direction of law, when they admitted the presentee of the patron in possession, and, as far as they were instructed by the documents before them, of the only legal patron: That though the law requires a presbytery to admit the presentee of the patron, it has given them no remedy, in the case of competing patrons, by which they can bring the claims in competition before the civil Courts: That the jurisdiction which the law has given them implies, that they must have a power of judging of the rights of competing patrons, *prima instantia*, to the effect of explicating that jurisdiction: That their judgment must of course have the effect to determine the settlement of the Church *pro hac vice*, and after execution to exclude every claim for vacant stipend: That the application of this doctrine does not prevent the parties from bringing their civil rights to trial afterwards, or to settle them in all time coming by the sentence of the civil Courts;

whereas, if the presbyteries have not the right of determining *pro hac vice*, as the opposite doctrine affirms, it would follow of necessity, that they cannot comply with the law which requires them to induct a presentee, in any case, where there is a competition for the right of patronage ; and that, in this way, parishes might be kept vacant for many years, during the protracted litigations of competing patrons : That if patrons should sometimes suffer by erroneous judgments pronounced by presbyteries, they would, in such instances, have only their own negligence to blame, because they ought to have taken measures to settle their rights of patronage before the vacancies occurred ; and that they have not only no ground for complaint, when the presbyteries induct the presentees, who appear to them, from the documents before them, to have the best title, but can have no right to avail themselves of their own negligence to protract the vacancies by litigation, so as to deprive the parishioners, in the mean time, of all the advantages of pastoral care. And finally, that the power claimed by the presbytery of Lanark, is no new or unfounded pretension : That the same power was uniformly exercised by the bishops in Scotland as long as episcopacy was established ; and that the presbyteries, coming in place of the bishops, must be vested with the same jurisdiction.

These arguments were completely successful in the Court of Session, who unanimously found, that the minister inducted had a legal title to the benefice.

The same arguments, afterwards pleaded on an appeal at the bar of the House of Lords, were not equally successful there. Lord Hardwicke, who was then the Lord Chancellor, reversed the judgment of the Court of Session, chiefly on a ground which none of the parties had anticipated ; and which, not having at all occurred to the counsel who had pleaded the case for the respondent, could be met by nothing which had fallen from the bar. Lord Hardwicke said, that he could not conceive how a Scotch bishop could have been possessed of a power or jurisdiction, which an English bishop never had. Though the answer is very obvious, that they lived under very different constitutions, and, as bishops, had in this point, and many others, a very different jurisdiction,

there was no possible opportunity of making this reply. The decree of reversal was in consequence pronounced; and whether it was well or ill founded, this decision has ever since been held as having laid down the law on the subject.

At the same time, the following anecdote may be relied on, although, as the question of law is now for such a length of time understood to be settled, it is perhaps no longer of any importance.

The counsel who pleaded for the presentee to Lanark, and who belonged to the English bar, was so thoroughly convinced, that the decision was wrong, and that the Lord Chancellor had misapprehended the point on which he had rested it, that he afterwards asked his Lordship to give him an opportunity, for his own satisfaction, to converse with him privately on the subject. He was the more solicitous to have this opportunity, that at first he had himself been with difficulty persuaded to relinquish his English prejudices, in favour of the powers claimed for the presbyteries in Scotland, and asserted to have belonged to the Scotch bishops; but was ultimately so thoroughly persuaded that the doctrine was sound, that he thought he would either be able to satisfy Lord Hardwicke, that the decision was not founded in law, or would hear from his Lordship a reason to convince him, that his own opinion had been too hastily adopted. Lord Hardwicke very readily gave him the opportunity which he requested. The result was, that he so completely convinced his Lordship that he had taken up an English idea, not applicable to the law of Scotland, and that the ground on which he had chiefly rested his decision was untenable, that he candidly acknowledged his mistake; and requested him to say to the clergyman chiefly concerned, whom he had seen at the bar, that he was afraid he had done him an injury by an involuntary mistake, which he had not the power of correcting; but trusted that he would be candid enough to believe, that he had acted conscientiously at the time, and sincerely intended to do justice to all the parties.

This anecdote the writer of this note received from Dr Dick, the clergyman in question, a very few weeks

before his death. He had been translated from Lanark to Edinburgh in 1754; and, even at that distant period, (in 1782,) he mentioned this history of his case in the House of Lords, with a considerable degree of emotion. He had suffered severely from the litigation. He had entered into life more independent than most of his brethren. But the expence of living at Lanark for the greatest part of four years without a stipend, added to the expence of the process, which (excepting the assistance which he got from the public funds of the church at the disposal of the Assembly) fell entirely on himself, had nearly exhausted his resources before he was translated to Edinburgh; and materially affected his private comfort to the end of his life. *

Dr Dick was unquestionably one of the ablest and most distinguished men, whom the Scottish Church has ever possessed. The extent of his knowledge, the correctness of his taste, the vigour of his talents, his capacity for the business of active life, and the powerful, chaste, and commanding eloquence, in which he had so few competitors, raised him far above the level of the greatest part of his contemporaries. Not unconscious of his own superiority, he had a strength of principle, and a delicacy of feeling, which often prevented him from asserting his just pretensions, and which gave his

* Before this subject is dismissed, it should be mentioned, that, independent of every question of law, the opposition made to Dr Dick's settlement at Lanark was the effect of a political intrigue, conducted by the magistrates of Lanark, supported by the officers of the crown. The magistrates at first claimed the patronage to themselves, and offered a presentation to the presbytery. But sensible that their claim could not be sustained, they had influence to obtain a presentation from the crown in favour of the same individual whom they had presented. Their own presentation was not insisted on; and all the subsequent litigation for the patronage was between the crown and Mr Lockhart of Lee. The party politics of the burgh, and hostility to the family of Lee, had an influence at Lanark stronger than the merits of any question at issue.

There have been doubts in later times, whether even the right of patronage was then decided, as it ought to have been. It has been understood that the patronage of Lanark was not the only one, of which the family of Lee were in possession by the same tenure. But the crown has never attempted another challenge, and will not probably be forward to bring the decision given in the case of Lanark into question, by another claim on the same grounds.

character a dignity and a pre-eminence, of which every individual who associated with him was conscious.

His eloquence in public debate was of the highest order: heard indeed but seldom, and never on insignificant subjects—but when it did break forth, the splendid and vigorous eloquence of intellect and feeling, supported by dignity of manner and powers of language, which the ablest of his opponents felt to be irresistible. In a higher situation he would have been equal to all that superiority of talents can achieve. In the situation which providence assigned him, he was less fortunate than many of his inferiors; and conscious that he was so, he exerted himself less than he ought to have done.

But he knew how to preserve his high minded dignity and independence, when he was most disappointed; and as a man of sterling worth and probity, who never could bend his integrity to his interest, or seek by adulation or sycophancy the advantages which were due to his talents, he lived in the humble situation to which providence confined him, cheerful and contented among his friends, happy in his family, and universally respected and looked up to by the whole community of Edinburgh; till death suddenly and prematurely put an end to his honourable life, in 1782, at the age of sixty-one.

The writer of this note confesses, that from habits of intimacy and affection, he regarded Dr Dick, for the last seven years of his life, with the greatest veneration, and cannot but be partial to his memory. He has perhaps exceeded the proper bounds in this account of him; and even in his history of the case of Lanark. He trusts that some allowance will be made for a feeling, which has given him an irresistible inclination to do some justice to the character of one, whom he can never cease to remember with gratitude and reverence.

Note HH, p. 476.

Besides the superintendence of the pastoral functions and personal conduct of the clergy, after they are in possession of their benefices, which is vested in the Ecclesiastical Courts; there is another power entrusted to the presbyteries, which is intended to protect the

church and the people, against the introduction of clergymen who are of exceptionable or doubtful characters.

Before a minister can be inducted to a benefice, intimation must be made from the pulpit of the parish, that on the day appointed for his ordination or admission, (that is, for his collation to the pastoral cure and the benefice,) any individual parishioner may state to the presbytery, any objections to his life or doctrine, which he may think relevant, of which the presbytery are afterwards to judge.

When that day arrives, intimation is made at the principal door of the church, that if there are any objections to be made to his life or doctrine, the presbytery are met in an adjoining house, ready to hear and to decide on them. But in this case, the diet is peremptory; the objections, if they are made, must be verified *instantly*; and if there are any witnesses to support them, they must be in attendance, and ready to be produced for examination.

If the presbytery should find that the objections are relevant, and are proved, they have authority to sist their procedure, and to refuse to go on to the induction. If the objections stated are frivolous or unfounded, or if the proof offered is insufficient to sustain them, they are of course dismissed, and the induction is completed.

These forms are uniformly and strictly observed, and cannot go into desuetude. There are not many instances indeed, in which presbyteries find it necessary to sist their procedure at the return of an edict; though some examples there have been, at no remote period. But every one must see the efficiency of the law, wherever there can be a substantial reason for having recourse to it.

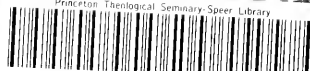
So effectual and complete is the superintendence, under which the Scottish clergy hold their situations in the church.





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